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Two orphans

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THE TWO ORPHANS OR The Depth of a Sisters Love

ILLUSTRATED

An adaptation from the play of the

"TWO ORPHANS"

as performed at the Union Square Theatre,

BY E. G. WALRAVEN.

NEW YORK.

Norman L. Munro & Co., Publishers.

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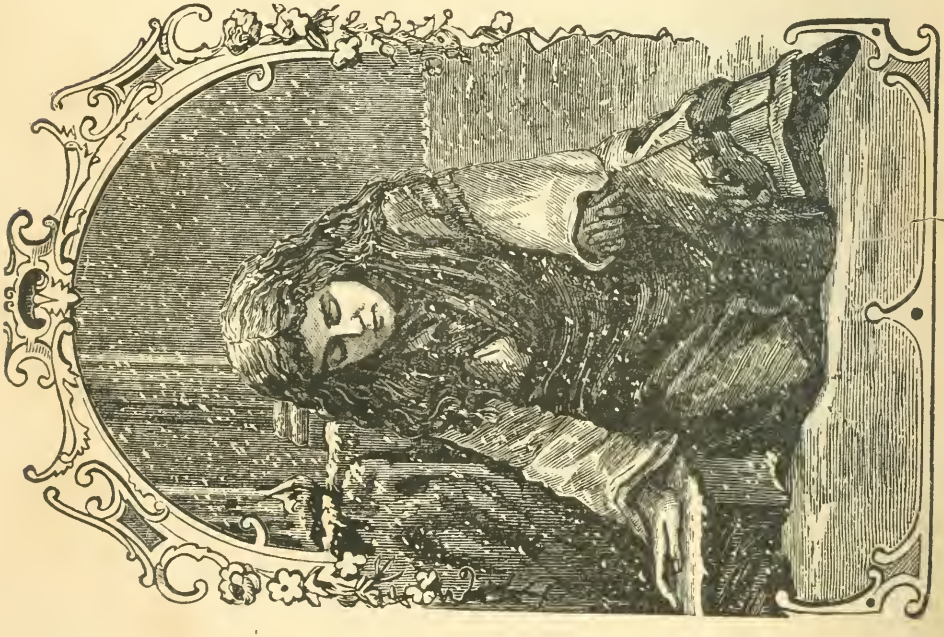
HENRIETTE.



BLIND LOUISE.

THE TWO ORPHANS;

OR,

The Depth of a Sister's Love.

A thrilling story of Parisian Life, an adaptation from the play of the "Two Orphans" now being performed at the Union Square Theater.

BY E. G. WALRAVEN.

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THE TWO ORPHANS.

CHAPTER I.

FROM NORMANDY TO PARIS.

THE dusty dilligence which rolled over the hard road from Evreux to Paris on a certain warm summer's day in the year 18—, contained but two passengers, and those young girls.

As they sat on the hard leathern seat, weary from the effects of the long ride which would cause more mature persons to look jaded, one can see that so engrossed are they with the thoughts of their arrival in Paris that they forget the discomforts of the journey in the speculation of their reception.

"And you are quite certain that the kind Monsieur Martin will meet us, sister?" asked the younger for at least the twentieth time since the commencment of the ride.

"He must be awaiting our arrival, Louise; for did I not write to say that we were coming?" replied Henriette as she smoothed her sister's fair hair with a caressing motion which was unusually tender even for a sister, and as one looks into the young girl's face they can see the reason of the watchful care which Henriette exercises over her sister.

Louise is blind.

"But if he should not be there?" persisted the blind girl

"Then we will go to his house. I have the address. We will not think of his not being there, sister mine; but rather enjoy the ride. I will describe to you everything we meet."

For answer Louise nestled close beside her sister, and laid her head with its wealth of golden hair upon her shoulder.

While Henriette is thus engaged let us explain why the two young girls were thus journeying alone to the great city.

Nearly six months previous to the opening of our story the girls were bereft of their only protecter by the cold hand of death, and had been offered a home in Paris by Monsieur Martin who was a cousin of the deceased mother.

For several months the girls had remained with their kind friends in Normandy, lingering near their childhood's home, as if intuition had warned them of the long train of evils which would attend them at the capital.

They had started for Paris, thinking that no other warning to their relative, save a letter which was despatched the day previous to their departure, was necessary.

So much for the reason of their journey, and before the orphans arrive in Paris, we will visit the hotel occupied by the Marquis de Presles, whose vile scheming caused so much misery to our heroines.

The marquis was the representative of one of the oldest families in Paris; but unlike his ancestors, he was notorious as a libertine and a roue.

Every pleasure that wealth or sin could purchase was his, and in that city of crime and pleasure, none so ready as he to adopt any scheme, however vile, to attain some new pleasure which should gratify his depraved taste.

Seated before a breakfast table loaded with every delicacy which could tempt an appetite already blunted by dissipation, the marquis was partaking sparingly of his morning meal, when his valet entered and awaited permission to speak.

"What is it, Antoine?"

"Monsieur Lafleur has some important——"

"Admit him," ordered the marquis, who saw in this early visit some new scheme; for Lafleur was one who, for the sake of the liberal reward which the marquis was ever ready to give his tools, pandered to the nobleman's vices.

Lafleur entered with a cringing bow, and remained standing in a respectful attitude until his patron should allow him to unfold his budget of villainy.

"Sit down, Lafleur, and tell me what brings you here at this early hour."

"Three o'clock in the afternoon is not an early hour for Lafleur, monsieur," replied that worthy, as he availed himself of the marquis' permission to be seated.

"People who have such vile taste as to retire at night, must expect to be out of their beds at any unreasonable hour; but tell me what brings you here?"

"Monsieur has heard of the beauty of the girls of Normandy?"

"Yes, what of that?" asked De Presles listlessly.

"There are two young girls from Normandy who are to arrive in Paris this evening. They are without relatives, except you call the cousin of their mother, who by the way, is my brother-in-law, a relative," answered Lafleur, as he watched the face of his employer carefully, and as he saw it light up at his information, he added. "My brother-in-law is in Lyons, and I have opened the letter sent by the two orphans, advising him of their intended arrival to-night. Therefore I shall be obliged to meet them."

"And you propose what?"

"Anything Monsieur the Marquis is pleased to wish."

"How old are these girls?"

"The oldest is seventeen, and the blind one——"

"Is one of them blind?"

"She is."

"Ah! then I do not see how she could interest me,"

"But the other one might, monsieur."

"You are right!" exclaimed the marquis after a short pause; "but what should we do with the blind one?"

"Never fear for her. She can go wherever she chooses," answered Lafleur in a careless tone. "Blindness is a good stock in trade in this city. Before I knew the liberality of the Marquis de Presles, I was often tempted to wish that I was blind myself; for it is said that the good God has such under his especial keeping."

"I am afraid, Lafleur, that if you were deaf and dumb, as well as blind, the Lord would show you very little favor," said the marquis with a laugh.

"Perhaps not. But have you any commands for me?" rejoined Lafleur quickly.

"Yes. If you bring me the girl—without the blind one, remember—I will pay you one hundred louis. If you fail, I will not——"

"We will not think of failure, my dear Marquis," quickly interrupted Lafleur. "Where shall I take the girl?"

"I am to have a party of friends at Bel-Air this evening, and you may take her there. Be sure that you take her in such a condition that she can make no disturbance."

"I will use the old remedy, and then you can awake her whenever you wish, as you have the antidote," replied Lafleur as he rose to go.

"You feel sure that you will succeed?" asked the

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Marquis, who had grown considerably interested in the scheme.

"Feel sure? I am as certain as if the Marquis de Presles's louis were already jingling in my pocket," answered Lafleur in a confident tone.

"Very well. I shall expect you this evening."

"I shall be there, my lord."

And with a low bow, the villain who was ready to sell more than his soul for gold, departed, leaving his patron to gloat over the surprise he had in store for his friends, and, to their shame be it said, a greater portion of those friends were so-called ladies, and in attendance upon royalty itself.

Lest our readers think this an exceptional case in the city of Paris at the time of which we write, we will refer them to the history of France for the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, and they will find that abduction, murder, and all manner of crime stalked abroad through that beautiful city, setting the law, and those whose duty it was to enforce the law, at defiance.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND SONS.

"KNIVES to mend, scissors to grind, knives to grind."

Among the large class of people who get their living from the street, as it were, none seem to have as few customers as the scissors-grinders, although they are among the most useful of their class, and it is not strange that on the day that the Normandy coach was to bring a new victim to the Marquis de Presles, Pierre Frochard, the crippled scissor-grinder, should have traversed a large portion of the city without having an opportunity of adding much to his little hoard.

His plaintive cry of "Knives to mend—scissors to grind," was unlike a great majority of the street cries, inasmuch as it seemed to be the cry of a wounded soul striving for something beyond its reach, instead of the rough unmeaning jargon which venders give utterance to in a sing song manner, and which expresses nothing save a confusion of guttural sounds.

Pierre Frochard was a young man of about twenty years of age; but whose sufferings caused him to have the appearance of one many years older. His face was pale and distorted, his form bent and misshapen, and yet he was one whom the careful observer would have become interested in, and the charitably disposed, have bestowed alms upon, had Pierre not been one of those few of his class to whom alms hurt worse than a curse.

Weary and footsore the poor scissor-grinder had, toward the close of the day, found himself near the Pont Neuf, and after ascertaining that there were none near who were in need of his services, placed his machine near one of the buildings and was resting his aching limbs.

Chance had brought him near the Normandy coach house, and he resolved to await the coming of the diligence in the hope of earning a few sous by carrying the baggage of some traveler.

There was also in the vicinity a drinking saloon filled with noisy revellers, and whenever a fresh burst of mirth from within was heard Pierre shuddered visibly.

The cripple leaned against his machine, as though long association with the wood and iron had endowed it with sympathy for his sufferings. The poor creature, although he had a mother and brother, had never known what it was to receive one word of pity or consolation from a human being, and what wonder he should cling affectionately to the rude machine that accompanied him everywhere, even if it was the work or his own hands, and endowed with action only when his poor withered foot pressed the treadle.

For some time he had remained in this position, when he was aroused from his reverie by the closing of the door to the cabaret, and looking up he saw a stout middle-aged woman approaching him.

She was in manner and appearance an exact opposite to the cripple. Her clothes were whole, and enveloped the stout form in a manner indicative of great comfort to the wearer. A pair of small, hard, gray eyes twinkled from the fat, round face, which was bordered with short, black hair that formed a distinct beard, and one on seeing La Frochard for the first time would have judged her to be an easy, happy old soul, whose only care in life was to provide a good dinner, and whose only want was the material for a good dish of gossip.

A change came over Pierre's face as he saw her. A change which plainly told that this poor bent form was to receive some insult which would cut deeply the great, honest heart which it held.

In a painfully limping manner he approached the woman, and in a tender, imploring voice, said:

"Why mother is that you?"

"Yes, it's me, you lazy, good-for-nothing," replied the affectionate mother, as she gazed at her deformed boy, while a look of scorn passed over her face, completely changing her into a hard grasping old woman.

A look of sorrow came over the poor cripple's face as he put out his hands as if to ward off the cruel words.

"Lazy?" he repeated. "Why, mother, I do all the work I can."

"Work!" exclaimed the old woman, as she smiled incredulously. "You call that work? Bah! why did Heaven bless you with such a beautiful deformity. Why, to earn your living by, you puny, limping cripple—and you work when all you need to do is to sit here, hold out your hand, and make your fortune."

And as La Frochard finished speaking she turned away with a gesture expressive of disgust at the honest living her son was trying to earn.

A tear came into Pierre's eyes as his mother finished speaking, and he answered sadly.

"Mother, I cannot beg, it is not possible."

"Eh? Not possible—why not?" queried mother Frochard in a sharp, rasping voice.

"Mother," said Pierre going toward her, and laying a thin wasted hand upon her arm; when I was an infant you carried me through the streets and taught me to repeat begging prayers I did not understand. They put money into your pocket, and I knew no shame. But now it is different. You drove me out and bade me come here to beg. When I knelt and held out my hand to ask alms in the name of the misfortunes with which Heaven has chastised me, shame choked my utterance, and I was overcome by anger at my own humiliation. A passer-by looked on me with pity, and put a trifling coin in my hand. A great lump came in my throat, and my eyes filled with tears. No mother I cannot beg—I cannot, I cannot!"

And as Pierre finished speaking, he returned to his machine, and leaning over it seemed to pour out his grief to the rude structure.

"You undutiful son," exclaimed the old woman in a burst of anger. "You had rather leave your poor brother and me to starve."

This unkind thrust roused Pierre, and he answered quickly:

"My brother need not starve. He has health and strength, and yet you support him in idleness."

"Why should my beautiful Jacques work?" demanded the old woman with a look of disdain at the cripple. "My handsome boy,—the very image of his poor, dead father that those scoundrels of the law robbed me of."

"He suffered death for a murder of which they found him guilty," timidly suggested Pierre.

"And can I look to you to avenge him?" asked the old woman in derision. "No, no; my handsome Jacques will do that one of these days. He's no milksop. Nothing frightens him."

"No! not even the sight of blood," answered Pierre with a shudder.

"Shut up; you are good for nothing but to be honest," screamed Mother Frochard, in a fury. "I hate honest people; scum that imposes on the poor——"

At this moment the old woman's tirade was interrupted by the appearance of several people who were coming toward them, and changing her voice suddenly from one of deepest anger for a whining tone habitual to professional beggars, she went toward them with outstretched hands, repeating the words she had so vainly endeavored to force Pierre to repeat.

"Charity, good people. Charity for the love of Heaven!"

The poor cripple went back to his machine with a despondent air, and poured out his troubles in an undertone to that companion.

"Perhaps she is right, I *am* good for nothing except to be honest. Alas! I have never had any one to teach me."

Pierre's musings were destined to be disturbed on this evening, for he heard a loud, rough voice behind him which caused him to start with fear.

It was that of his brother Jacques.

The handsome Jacques, as his mother had called him, and if a good specimen of a ruffian may be called handsome, then Jacques was a perfect beauty.

He was a tall, strong, well-formed fellow of some twenty-four years, with a face that betokened brutality in every feature.

He was dressed with a view to effect: wearing the flowered waistcoat so much in vague at that period. A red handkerchief was bound around his head, and on it was a wide brimmed hat, blue stockings reaching to his knees, and in his ears hung large gold hoops which were supposed to lend an air of distinction to the whole costume. In his mouth was a black clay pipe, and his whole bearing was that of a man who is well satisfied with himself, and who expected the rest of the world to admire him.

"Hello! Here is the old woman and her precious abortion of a son," was his first greeting, as he laughed heartily at the sight of poor Pierre bending over his work. "Has Marianne come yet, mother?"

"Not yet, my son," replied the old woman, gazing at her son in admiration.

"Never mind, she'll come in time," he said, half to himself and half to his mother. Then as he heard a noise from the crowd he had just left in the cabaret, he cried out: "You can order everything you want, wine, brandy, anything, I'll stand it."

Alarmed at this outbreak of liberality on her son's part, Mother Frochard asked quickly

"My son, are you going to pay? Have you found a purse?"

"No, but Marianne has. I have ordered her to bring me some money, and she'll do it."

This answer appeared to please the old woman, for she clasped her hands as if in an ecstacy of joy and admiration, and exclaimed in a low voice:

"Isn't he in a good humor?"

"Come here, Pierre," ordered Jacques, in a stern voice.

The cripple looked up, and for an instant seemed hesitating whether to obey or not; but a warning look from his brother decided him, and he went slowly towards the man who knew neither pity nor love for his afflicted brother.

"Look here, cripple! Good children always give an account of their earnings to their parents," said Jacques, in a sarcastic tone. Then turning to the old woman, he asked: "Isn't that so, mother?"

"Certainly, my lamb. You have excellent principles," and again the old woman compared one son with the other, as she had done hundreds of times every day since their birth.

But poor Pierre looked up piteously to his brother, and said

"When I give you an account of my earnings you pocket all."

"Well, what if I do?" was Jacques' brutal answer.

"It is unjust," said Pierre. "It's so like——"

"That's enough," interrupted Jacques. "I want your money, but none of your fine speeches. How much have you got?"

And he made a gesture as though to strike his brother should his demand not be complied with quickly enough.

Pierre saw that it was useless to resist, and drawing out a handful of small coins he proceeded to count them.

"Twenty-two livres, seven sous, and six deniers," he answered, as soon as he ascertained the amount.

Jacques took the money from Pierre's hand with a motion which caused the cripple to whine with pain, and as he put them in his capacious pocket, he said with the tone of a man who has been defrauded of his just dues.

"And all this fuss about that. Why, what have you been doing for a whole week with those spindle legs and arms?"

"I have walked the streets from morning until night, with my wheel upon my back," answered Pierre, as if eager to convince his brother that he had not been idle. "I have lived upon bread and water. I could do no more."

"Well, your trade don't pay," was Jacques rough answer. "I must find you something better."

"Something better? You? No! no!" exclaimed Pierre as he moved away trembling in every limb at the very thought of being obliged to work after his brother's fashion.

Jacques did not fancy Pierre's rejoinder, and would have heaped some fresh insult upon the cripple, had not La Frochard come forward, anxious to show her favorite how well she had done.

"I have saved three livres and eighteen sous. Put them with Pierre's, and that makes——"

"Oh, never mind how much it makes," said Jacques impatiently, as he took the money from his mother's unwilling grasp; "but I'll take it on principle."

Then turning to his brother he said in a voice which was intended to convey his good feelings.

"Come, cripple, let's drink," and at the same time he moved towards the carbaret.

"No," answered Pierre sadly; "drink always affects my head."

Jacques gave utterance to a coarse laugh, as he said:

"Why, who would think we are brothers. You have the blood of a sheep in your veins. You're a disgrace to the family, while I boast the blood of a Frochard, and the Frochards have been outlaws for an hundred and fifty years."

This burst of boasting was again too much for Mother Frochard.

She was obliged to give vent to her feelings by rising her hands to heaven, and exclaiming:

"Ah, what a man! I love him—he's so like his father."

"Come along, then, if you love me," said Jacques, who had heard his mother's fervent exclamation, "for I am thirsty."

As they opened the door of the cabaret he turned again to Pierre, who was again bending over his wheel and asked:

"Are you coming with us!"

"No, no," answered the cripple, and as he heard the sound of wheels he added, but not until his brother and mother had disappeared within the shop where they would spend his hard earnings for drink. "There's the Normandy coach just arriving. I will run and see if there's not a chance to make a few sous."

And Pierre hastened towards the coach as fast as his crippled limbs would admit of, little thinking what the diligence would bring that day, and how closely his life would be connected with one of the occupants at least.

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CHAPTER III.

THE OUTCAST.

As Pierre said, the Normandy coach had just arrived; but the poor cripple saw at a glance that his chance of earning a few sous was hopeless.

The only passengers that alighted from the ricketty old coach, were the two young girls whom we have seen in our first chapter.

They alighted in a dazed sort of manner, as if the bustle and din of the great city had confused them, and Henriette leading Louise by the hand, entered the open space in front of the coach office.

A bench (which from the numerous marks of knives and pencils upon it, showed that it served as a resting place for the loungers who always cluster around places of this kind, and talk horsey slang while admiring the noble brutes that form the establishment of the proprietor) was just outside the office door, and to this Henriette led her blind sister.

"Sit here, Louise," she said, in a low, sweet voice, which told all the love she felt for the afflicted girl.

Henriette looked vainly around for the relative whom they expected to meet; but not a person was to be seen.

She could not repress a feeling of anxiety; but she bravely strove to hide her feelings from Louise.

But the blind girl was anxious as well as Henrietta.

"I am surprised that Monsieur Martin is not here to meet us," she said half to herself.

Henriette's quick ear caught the murmur, and she endeavored to divert her sister's mind.

"Oh, he'll come soon," she said, reassuringly. Then to occupy the blind girl's mind with other matters than their own condition, she added: "Oh! Louise, Paris is beautiful. Oh, my poor sister, if you could only see its wonders!"

"Tell me what you see. Where are we?" asked Louise, excitedly.

"In an open square at the end of a beautiful bridge," answered Henriette, looking around her, "which has a magnificent statue in the middle."

"That must be the Pont Neuf," said Louise as she remembered the picture which Henriette had called up to her mind. "Papa used to speak of it."

"And on this side I can see two great towers," continued the beautiful girl who was thus supplying the place of her sister's sight. "It must be Notre Dame."

"Notre Dame," repeated Louise, sadly, as she arose from her seat. "How I wish I could see it. It was on that spot, that I, a helpless infant, was left to perish," and as the blind girl thus recalled the thoughts of the past, the tears, unbidden, came to her eyes, and the sightless orbs were turned towards the spot she would see, as if they would burst their filmy vail and, forced by her grief, gaze upon the spot where she had been left to die of cold or starvation. "It was there your dear father found me. But for him I should have died—perhaps—perhaps that would have been better," she added in a tone of anguish that was almost a wail, so much misery was there embodied in it.

"My darling sister!" exclaimed Henriette, "why do you say that?"

"Because," replied Louise in the same sad tone, "I should not have lived to become blind and unhappy."

"Louise, do not speak thus," said Henriette as she clasped her sister in her arms, "Our dear parents loved us both alike—you were their consolation and happiness, and it was their first grief when Heaven deprived you of your sight."

'Misfortune pursues me, sister," replied Louise, refusing to be comforted, "for scarcely had this affliction befallen me when we were left orphans without help or friends."

"No, no, dear Louise!" interrupted Henriette, "not without friends I hope I have turned all we possessed into money, and we are in this great Paris, where there are skilful doctors who will soon restore my poor Louise's eyes to their old time brightness," and there was in Henriette's voice something which ever had the power to cheer her afflicted sister.

"Heaven grant that your hopes may be realized," said Louise more hopefully. Then thinking of their present situation again, she asked. "But where can Monsieur Martin be? Why does he not come for us?"

For a moment Henriette had forgotten the forsaken condition in which they were. Alone in Paris, without friends, or even acquaintances, and unless the relative whom they were expecting should come for them, what could they do?

Henriette hardly dared to think of such an alternative, and more to satisfy her sister than from any expectation of finding him, she proposed to go and look for Monsieur Martin.

As Henriette went to look for Monsieur Martin, a young woman of about twenty years of age, entered the open space in front of the cabaret, and stood gazing sadly at the swift-running river.

Her face was that of a woman who had once been beautiful; but who was now pursued by remorse and sorrow. Her garments were scrupulously clean and neat; but with no attempt at display, and she wandered about like one having no aim or purpose save to escape from her own thoughts.

She stood silent and motionless as if she were some quaint figure of wood or stone rather than a woman in whose breast love and hate could wage eternal conflict, so absorbed was she in her bitter thoughts, that her face expressed her feelings as well as words could have done. Henriette returned to her sister with the information that their relative could not be seen, and just at that moment a burst of laughter and music came from the half-open door of the cabaret, which prevented the wanderer from hearing Henriette's approach or her voice.

Among the voices which could be heard from the drinking saloon, Jacques Frochard's coarse, brutal tones could be distinguished, and as she heard it, the poor young woman started as though stung by a viper.

"Yes, it is his voice," she said as she turned so as to face the door of the cabaret, "his voice singing and laughing. Aye! drink and carouse! forget her whose heart you have broken. Enjoy yourself while the victim of your brutality seeks the only refuge left her—death! The river is near, one plunge and it will all be over. May my dying shriek of despair ring in your ears as a never-ending curse.

And in the extremity of her anguish the wanderer rushed toward the wall and the sudden death she sought. Goaded by despair the unhappy woman was about to yield up her life to her Maker in all its sin, forgetting that if it was too vile for this world what would be its appearance there where all was holy.

As she was about to commit this rash act, her wild and almost maniacal gaze rested on several persons who were passing near, and she drew back shuddering.

"No, it is not yet dark enough," she muttered, "I should be seen and perhaps saved."

As she said this she clasped her hands to her head, and seemingly bewildered by the conflict of passions sank down upon the cold, damp pavement.

Henriette, who had been regarding the strange appearing woman, exclaimed as she fell:

"What can be the matter with that woman? She has fallen; she must be ill."

"Go to her and see if you can aid her, go, go, sister!" exclaimed Louise, quickly, and in her excitement rising from the seat and endeavoring to grope her way to the prostrate woman.

Like some angel of mercy Henriette went to the world weary woman, and in a voice which resembled a silvery chime of vesper bells, so gratefully did they fall upon the wanderer's ears, asked:

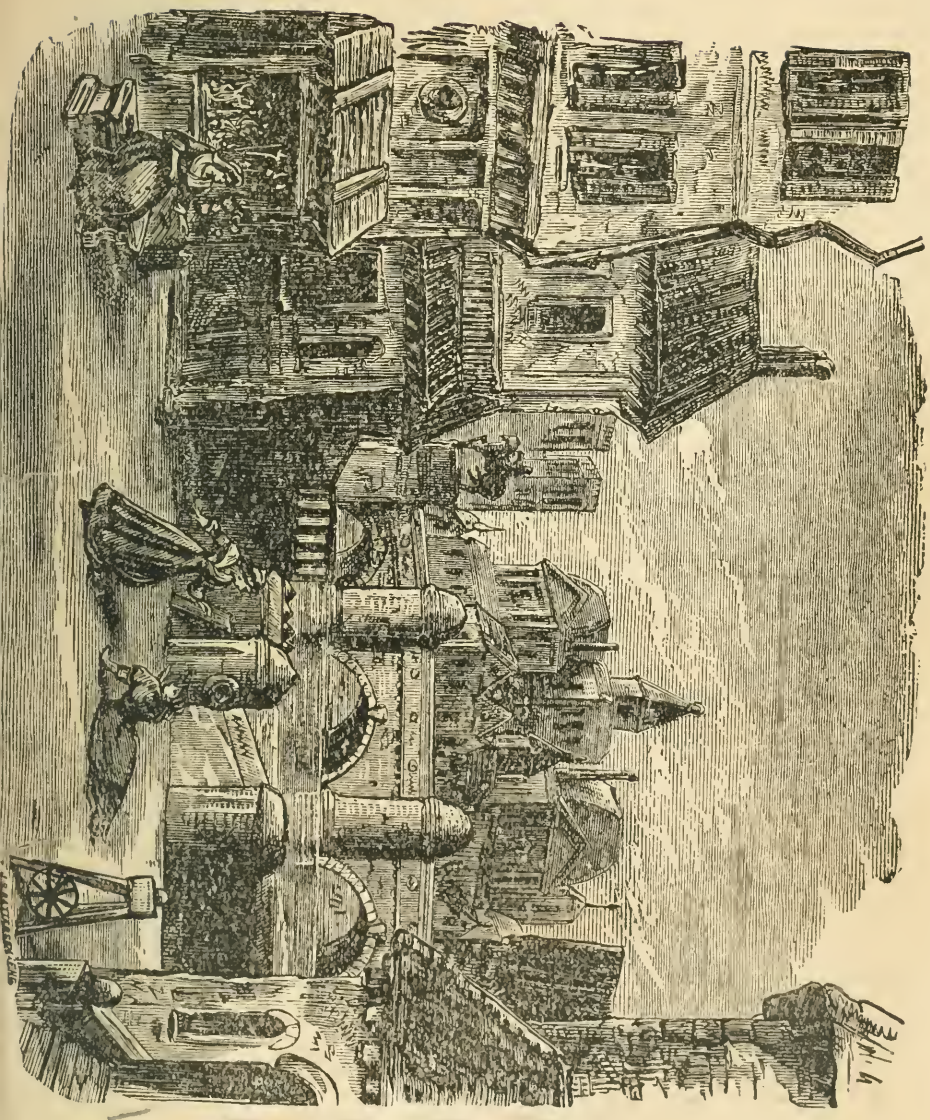
"Pardon me, madam; can I do anything for you?"

"You can do nothing."

"You seem exhausted; are you suffering?"

"Yes, yes; I am suffering!"

As she said this, thus invited the pity, as it were, of



"Leave me! Leave me! and do not attempt to save me!"

the good angel beside her, she arose from the ground, and Louise, who had been listening to the short conversation, eagerly said to Henriette—and there was a world of pathos in her voice—

"She said that with a voice full of misery and despair. "Help her, sister."

Henriette needed not to be prompted to do a charitable action; but her sister's words caused her to redouble her efforts to assist the poor woman.

"Madam, have confidence in us," she said kindly. "We are not rich; but if we can help you——"

"I have already told you," interrupted the woman almost fiercely, "that I want nothing. There are griefs that cannot be consoled; sufferings that cannot be alleviated. I only wish to—to——"

"You wish to die!" exclaimed Louise, as she clasped her hands in an agony of grief at the thought of the other's sufferings.

"Who told you that?" asked the woman passionately. "How do you know I want to die?"

"I feel it while I listen to you." answered the blind girl, who standing with her hands clasped, resembled more one of Raphael's Madonnas than a simple country girl. "Do you not know that we who are blind whom no external object distracts, listen with our whole being."

"Tell us your troubles," said Henriette soothingly. "Perhaps we can relieve them."

The woman gazed sadly at the fair girl who would thus take another's sorrows upon herself, in the hope of lightening the unhappy one's burden.

"Why should I tell you when you do not even know me?" she said slowly, and at the same time as if she wished to pour out all her troubles. "You have never seen me before, and yet you pity me. No, no; there is no help for me. Leave me, leave me, and do not attempt to save me."

As she finished speaking, the unhappy woman turned away, and would have left the place, but that she heard Henriette's voice.

"Stay," she said in a pleading tone. "For the love of heaven do not leave us thus," entreated Louise.

The poor woman was not proof against these pleadings, and yet she hesitated to open her heart, wicked as it was, to these pure girls.

"I am pursued by the officers of the law," she said hurriedly. "I have not strength to fly farther, and they will arrest me."

"What have you done?" asked Henriette pityingly.

"I have stolen," answered the woman, and as she saw the young girls shudder, she added quickly as if in extenuation "I have stolen money committed to my care. All the savings of a poor working girl. I stole it for him, for a wretch whom I fear; but whom alas, I love."

At this moment Jacques' voice was heard from the cabaret, and it sounded like some mocking fiend exulting over his triumphs.

"Good joke—a capital joke."

What demon could have put into his mouth those words, which probably would have expressed exactly his idea of the repentance of the girl whom he had so wronged.

"Listen, said the woman quickly, while a look of pain passed over her face, "that is his voice. He is there wasting in debauchery the money purchased by my crime. When I am away from him my reason returns, and I only feel the hate his baseness inspires. Alas! when he speaks to me my hate disappears; I cower and tremble before him, and am his slave. I have stolen for him, and I believe I would *kill* at his bidding."

She remained silent for a moment, and then hiding her face in her hands burst into an agony of tears, and exclaimed:

"No! no! it is better that I should die."

"You cannot atone for a fault by committing a crime," said Henriette.

"If I am found they will arrest—imprison me!" exclaimed the woman, clasping her hands.

"And repentance will pay the debt you owe to Heaven," added the blind girl's low voice, like a song sweet and vailed.

"Heaven! Do you believe there is a Heaven?" asked the woman, almost roughly, hiding her real feelings behind a mask of *brusquerie*.

The two girls started as if they had received a blow, and their faces expressed the sorrow they felt at this implied atheism.

"Do I believe there is a Heaven?" asked Henriette in astonishment.

"I cannot believe that there is a Heaven for outcasts like me."

"Oh, unhappy woman!" exclaimed Louise in tones of deepest sorrow.

Then drawing some money from her little hoard, she handed it to the woman.

But although she could receive words of encouragement and advice from the orphans, and be grateful, she could not take their money, and she drew back quickly, exclaiming petulantly:

"No, no."

"Do not refuse, I implore you," entreated Louise, as she turned towards the woman with an imploring look upon her face.

Thus entreated the woman could do no less than comply with their request, and as she took the small amount of money, which was more valuable than priceless gems because of the sympathy which accompanied it, she said:

"Now I know that you are right. There must be a Heaven, for has it not sent two angels to succor and to save me."

And turning aside, the unhappy woman wiped the tears away, which this kind action had caused to flow

"Courage, have courage," said Henriette, as she laid her little hand caressingly on the woman's arm.

"Yes, yes, I will have courage. I'll fly from Paris, and from him. I wish I could give my life for you," she said, as she took the hands of the two orphans, and pressed them to her lips. "May Heaven bless you, farewell," she sobbed as she turned to go.

But she had not seen the door of the cabaret open, nor did she see Jacques, as he stood just outside the door.

"Ah, ha," he chuckled. "Madam Marianne at last."

Then as he saw the woman moving quickly away, he cried:

"Marianne!"

The sound of that voice was too potent for the poor woman.

"Where are you going?" demanded Jacques, coarsely.

"Away from you, whom I hope never to see again," answered Marianne, firmly.

Jacques went towards her quickly, and laid his hand roughly upon her trembling arm.

"Bah!" he said, savagely, "you don't want to see me? Then why did you stop when I called? What makes your hand tremble?"

"It does not tremble," answered Marianne, trying to appear firm. "I have found strength to resist you. I am ashamed of the life I lead and of the infamy into which you have plunged me."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jacques as he went towards the door of the cabaret. "Put all that stuff out of your head and follow me."

"I will not!" said the poor woman as she turned again to go.

"You must," insisted Jacques with an angry gesture, and then as she did not move, he added: "Come. Do you hear?"

For a moment Marianne was on the point of obeying him; but one glance at the two young girls who

were anxiously waiting her decision seemed to give her strength, and she answered boldly:

"Yes, I hear, and I refuse. I will not obey you."

"You want me to persuade you in the usual way, eh, do you?" cried Jacques brutally, as he went quickly towards the shrinking woman.

"You shall not, never again!" exclaimed Marianne, as she endeavored to escape from his cruel grasp.

But she was too late, Jacques grasped her by the hair with one hand, while with the other he clasped her slender throat, and in a moment his brawny hands would have choked her senseless, but that he heard the heavy tramp of armed men approaching.

In an instant he had released her, and Marianne rushing up to the guard exclaimed:

"Monsieur, arrest me, I am a thief."

Jacques was petrified with astonishment, while the two orphans awaited with beating hearts the denouement of this strange drama.

"Arrest you? Who are you?" asked the officer, in no little surprise.

"My name is Marianne Vauthier. Officers are in search of me. I escaped from them an hour ago." said Marianne, hurriedly, as if she feared her courage would give way. "Now I wish to deliver myself to justice.

"She has gone crazy," ejaculated Jacques, as he moved to a convenient distance in order to make his escape, should she denounce him.

"Marianne Vauthier," said the officer, reading from a paper which he had taken from his pocket, "accused of theft——"

"Of which I am guilty," interrupted the woman.

"Well, if you confess it I must take you La Salpetriere," said the officer, half doubting her sanity, as he motioned her between two files of soldiers.

"My expiation begins," said Marianne, as she passed by where the two orphans were standing. "Pray that Heaven may give me courage to complete it."

The soldiers moved off, bearing the self-convicted woman with them, while Henriette and Louise could only pray silently that her expiation might be the means of restoring her to the place she had lost through her unhappy love.

Jacques remained looking after the departing prisoner for a few moments, and then giving vent to a low whistle expresive of surprise, regret, and perhaps, shame, disappeared in to the cabaret, saying as he entered:

"To Salpetriere. She's a fool!"

And in a few minutes he was joining his comrades in their debanchery, with not a thought of the unfortunate girl, who, for his sake, had committed a crime for which she must suffer long weary months, perhaps years.

And while he was thus occupying his time, the two orphans awaited the coming of their relative.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABDUCTION.

FOR a few moments after Marianne had been carried away by the guards the two orphans stood silent.

They had, in the few moments that had elapsed since their arrival in Paris, seen more misery in one poor girl's life than they had thought could exist, from evil causes, in the whole city.

Having been born and reared in the quiet Norman town, they knew none of that misery which arises from sin, and judging others by their own pure and spotless lives, were shocked beyond measure by Marianne's brief confession of guilt.

For the moment nothing could have presented so touching a sight as the two young girls, standing clasped in each other's arms, and striving to comfort each other in their grief at Marianne's sad fate.

Although, as the poor outcast had said, they had never before seen her, nevertheless, from out their pure, tender hearts went a great flood of sympathy and sorrow for the poor creature who, forsaken in her hour of trouble by the man for whose sake she had set upon herself the brand of infamy, had now commenced her dreary life of expiation.

Louise was the first to break the silence. Her quick ear had caught the sound of Pierre's footsteps as he came back from a neighboring street, and she trembled involuntarily.

"Henriette, where are you?" she said in a voice which betrayed her emotion.

"You are frightened, sister," answered Henriette, looking anxiously at the blind girl.

"Yes, yes. I am indeed!" exclaimed Louise, as she grasped her sister's arm as if to receive some assurance of her safety.

"And the night is falling fast," said Henriette to herself, beginning to feel seriously alarmed on account of the non-appearance of their relative.

During this time Pierre had remained by his wheel, busying himself in performing some trifling work, and listening intently to the conversation, that he might know if it was not possible for him to render them some assistance.

Those to whom fate has been unkind, are even more ready to assist their suffering fellows than one who has received all the gifts a kind Providence can bestow upon them.

The unprotected condition of the two girls had, to the poor cripple, something touching in it, and he longed to assist them; or at least to say some comforting word.

"Why does not Monsieur Martin come?" exclaimed Louise, giving herself up entirely to her fears.

As she spoke, and, almost as if in response to her question, a man advanced toward them, coming apparently from out of the shadow of the buildings.

We have no need to describe him, for the reader has met him before.

It was Lafleur.

"Here I am, mademoiselle," he said, as if in answer to Louise's agonized question.

Henriette gave utterance to a cry which was at the same time expressive of relief and fear.

She disliked even the appearance of the man, and instiuctively she recoiled from his approach.

Louise's "At last," was as significant as her sister's exclamation.

She could not see the approaching man's form, but she could hear his voice, and she could distinguish a peculiar tone which caused her to fear this man, on whom she believed that she was dependent for support.

Pierre saw that the friend whom the girls were expecting had arrived, and taking up the water-can from his wheel, he limped slowly down the long flight of stone steps which led to the river, to fill it.

He could not repress a sigh as he went, thinking that he should never again see the fair young girls who were so pure and holy, that while in their presence it seemed to him he was standing in a bright, glorious ray of sunlight.

"We began to be very anxious," said Henriette, as the man waited for her to speak.

Lafleur could not meet the gaze of the pure girl against whom he was about to commit so great and deadly a wrong, and holding his head in such a position that his eyes might not meet hers, he said:

"You must excuse me, for I live at a great distance from here."

"A great distance?" exclaimed Henriette in surprise. "Why we were told that your house was but a few steps from the bridge," said Louise excitedly, at thus receiving such a direct confirmation to the fears which his voice had aroused in her mind.

Lafleur saw at once that he had made a mistake. He was thinking of Bel-Air, and had for the moment forgotten the part he was playing. And in his endeavor to rectify his error quickly, he made matters very

much worse by the hesitating, nervous manner in which he spoke.

"Yes, yes," he said, "indeed it was—that is I did live but a short distance from here; but you see I have moved. Come, come, let us go, madamoiselle."

"You have moved?" asked Henriette still too much surprised by her relative's appearance to be able to fully collect her ideas.

"Yes, yes; only yesterday," replied Lafleur impatiently, as he felt that he could not keep up the very thin semblance of honesty, which he had assumed, much longer before the searching eyes of these innocent girls.

"And you said nothing of it in your letter?" queried Henriette as she shrunk back from any contact with the base wretch who stood before her.

"No," answered Lafleur quickly. "I did not mention it because—because, in short I did not know that I was going to move; but if you doubt me, here are some neighbors of mine, good, honest citizens, who will vouch for me."

As he spoke he made a sign which was unseen by Henriette, and at the same time three men came out from the same angle of the building at which Lafleur emerged, and came towards the little group.

It was impossible to see one sign of honesty about these citizens of Lafleur's; but, on the contrary, their appearance and manners proclaimed them to be men who, for the sake of a few francs would not hesitate at any action however vile.

Had honest Pierre been sent by fate, just at that particular moment, he would have no difficulty in recognizing them as cut-throats who were known to be ready for every species of villainy which promised to bring them in money.

As Henriette saw the men advancing towards her, she looked into their faces, and in an instant had read their characters as plainly as if she were reading the pages of a book.

Louise felt intuitively that some trouble impended; for she caught her sister by the arm and exclaimed:

"Henriette, do not leave me!"

Henriette had not time to answer her sister's entreaty, for the men whom Lafleur had called up were approaching very near, and one had stepped between her and Louise.

'What is the meaning of this?" she asked, panting with fear.

She received no reply; but Lafleur turned quickly to his men, and cried:

"Come, come; we have lost time enough. To the carriage!"

This was evidently the signal which the scoundrels were waiting to hear, for they at once sprang upon Henriette, and grasped her firmly.

Struggling impatiently in their clutches she got her head free long enough to cry in an imploring voice:

"No! no! Help, help!" and vainly tried to prevent the villains from covering her face with a handkerchief which was saturated with some pungent odor.

The struggle was very brief. In less than thirty seconds the dastardly deed was done, and Henriette was borne rapidly away, leaving Louise petrified w fear.

CHAPTER V.

BLIND AND ALONE.

FOR an instant the blind girl stood in an anxious, listening attitude, hoping to hear her sister's voice again; but no familiar sound met her ear, only the rushing of the water, or the footsteps of some pedestrian in the distance.

She was alone in Paris. Blind and alone, without relatives or friends. No one to whom she could go save to Him who watches over the sparrow, and His ways are not man's ways.

"I hear nothing," said Louise in a terrified whisper, as she again bent her head to listen. Then, in a voice trembling with fear, she cried: 'Henriette, where is that man? Sister, why do you not answer me?"

But no reply came to her agonized cries.

"Henriette! Henriette! Speak to me, speak one word. Answer me, Henriette! No answer, no reply?'

At this moment she heard a half stifled cry in the distance, and she recognized the tones of the voice.

"Louise!" was the cry, and the poor blind girl knew that her sister was beyond her reach, and in the power of cruel men who would know no mercy.

"Ah, 'tis she. They have dragged her away from me!" exclaimed Louise, in a tone which would have thrilled the hearer's heart with pity. "Oh! what shall I do? Alone! alone! abandoned!"

And with the last word the full measure of her situation surged across her brain with irresistible force, and she burst into a torrent of tears. Would that it were possible to express, through the cold medium of letters, all the intense suffering which came from the poor girl's heart with that one word "abandoned."

The reader, sitting in his or her cosy home, surrounded by friends, can have no idea of what the word may express; no idea of how a loving heart may be wrung when that word portrays their situation as fully as it did in Louise's position.

"What will become of me?" she cried between her sobs. "Alone in this great city; helpless and blind—my God! what *shall* I do? Where am I to go? I do not know which way to turn!"

The poor child knew that she was standing in the street, and in danger of being rudely pushed about by any party of revelers or so-called gallants, that might pass her, and her instinct, for her brain was in such a whirl that she could not think, warned her to try and reach some place less exposed.

She groped her way around; but her hands touched nothing, until unwittingly she approached the railing or wall which served as a guard to the steep bank that descended to the river.

Along this she felt her way until suddenly her hands met the empty air. It was the angle formed by the long flight of rough stone steps which led to the water, and all unconscious of her danger she was about to pursue her way.

Another step and she would have been dashed upon the rocky shore below, when, without having heard a sound, she felt herself clasped in a man's arms.

It was Pierre, who, having filled his water-can, had toiled laboriously to the top of the steps just in time to save the life of her who, to him, had seemed little less than an angel.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed, as he bore her to the center of the small square, "what were you going to do?"

"Nothing, nothing—what was it?" cried Louise incoherently, as pale and trembling she vainly tried to comprehend all.

"Another step and you would have fallen in the river," answered Pierre in a tone of horror at the thought of what might have happened.

"Oh, save me! save me!" cried Louise, grasping Pierre by the arm, as though fearful of being separated from one who could assist her.

By a singular chance, Pierre's mother had finished her drinking bout with her beautiful son Jacques, which was paid for with the cripple's scanty earnings, just at this moment, and she merged from the cabaret just in time to see her son supporting a beautiful young girl on his arm.

It was seldom that Mother Frochard allowed herself to be surprised by any thing she saw; but in this instance she was astounded. Had it been Jacques she would not have wondered; indeed it only would have seemed natural. But Pierre! why the girl must be

crazy, was her first thought, and then with her masculine strides she went up to them, and peered curiously in Louise's pale and frightened face.

"Why, what is the matter?" she asked, "what are you doing there, Pierre?"

But Pierre was too much occupied with his charge to make any reply, and La Frochard seized Louise by the arm with no gentle force, and asked in her shrill, rasping voice:

"Young woman, did you fall?"

Harsh and coarse as the voice was, it was a welcome sound to Louise, for she knew it was one of her own sex who had spoken.

She took hold of the hard, dirty hand, and because it was a woman's touch that met hers, she could have kissed it.

"Oh, madam," she cried, in an imploring tone. "Do not leave me, I beg. I entreat you not to leave me here all alone."

Mother Frochard prided herself upon not being weak, and she did not deign to answer Louise's prayer.

But Pierre hastened to reassure her.

"Calm yourself, madamoiselle, there is no danger now," he said, soothingly, as he gazed upon her beautiful face.

"What is it?" asked the old woman, impatiently. "Have you lost your head?"

And in the last question there was a sneer in the tones of the voice which was growing harder and harder every moment.

"Yes, yes," answered Louise, hardly knowing what she said. "I believe I shall go mad. Alas! madam, a few moments ago my sister was here with me, and they have stolen her away from me."

"Stolen her?" repeated Pierre, in a voice of the deepest commiseration, which presented a striking contrast to his mother's remark.

"Well, you must let your parents know," she said, coldly, as though having a child stolen were nothing more than a bit of pleasantry which was easily rectified.

"Our parents?" exclaimed Louise, sadly, breaking once more into tears. "Alas, madam we are orphans."

"You have acquaintances—friends," said Pierre.

"We have only just arrived in Paris, and I know no one here."

To Pierre this intelligence was sad; but his mother seemed to view the matter differently, for she asked eagerly:

"No one—no one at all?"

Louise shook her head sadly.

"Were the people who took your sister away, gentlemen, or common people?" asked Pierre, with the faint hope that he might aid her to find her sister.

"How can I tell?" asked Louise, mournfully.

"You could see their clothes," said Mother Frochard, impatient at what she believed the stupidity of the girl.

"Alas! madam, I am blind," said Louise, sadly.

"You are blind!" exclaimed Pierre, pityingly, as he gazed at her sightless eyes.

Mother Frochard looked at the young girl much as one would look at some newly discovered treasure, and she saw in a moment many ways of turning her prize to account.

"Ah, ha!" she thought. "Blind, without relations, friends, or acquaintances in Paris; and young and pretty."

"It is true," said the cripple, as he finished his examination of the poor girl's eyes, and turned sadly away.

"So young and pretty, too," he said, half to himself, wiping away a tear that, despite all his efforts, would make its appearance.

"Go! leave me alone with her," said the old woman. "I'll take care of her."

But Mother Frochard's promise to "take care" of the poor girl meant a great deal more than the words conveyed. Her care was something to be shunned, and God have mercy on the unfortunate whom the old woman should take under her protecting care.

"Yes, mother," said Pierre, signifying his readiness to obey his mother's commands. "we must help her to find her sister."

"That's all right," exclaimed the old woman, in a voice which should be kind and motherly; but at the same time darting a furious look at Pierre, who still lingered. "I know what to do."

Pierre stood gazing at the blind girl, who still retained her hold of the old woman's arm, and it seemed as if he was unable to leave her charmed presence.

"You get out," exclaimed the old woman suddenly, in a fierce whisper, as she unloosed the girl's grasp, and went towards the cripple.

Fearing lest she was about to be deprived of her protectress, Louise said, as she vainly endeavored to touch her arm again:

"You will not leave me, madam?"

"Never fear, my dear, I am here," replied Mother Frochard, cheeringly.

Pierre went slowly towards his wheel, and raising it on his back, started to go. He could not resist a last glance at the young girl.

"Blind!" he exclaimed, as he gazed upon her slight form. "So young and so pretty." Then, as he thought of his own deformity, a bitter smile passed over his face, which in its bitterness was painful, because of the misery which it served to portray, and he added:

"Pretty! what is that to you, miserable cripple?"

And, as if he had convinced himself that he must not think of beauty, or anything but his own wretchedness, he walked wearily away, while his cry of "Knives to grind! Scissors to grind!" was doubly pathetic in the intensity of the despair which seemed to come with it.

"Come, come, my pretty child, don't be downcast," said Mother Frochard, as she laid her hand on the blind girl's shoulder, and took mental note of the clothing which the poor girl wore.

"Alas! to whom shall I go for help? asked Louise, sadly.

"To me," said La Frochard, throwing all the dignity and maternal tone possible into her words. "I am an honest woman, and mother of a family. I will give you a home until you find your sister."

"Ah, madam, you are very good to have pity on me," said Louise, thankfully. "But we will find my sister, will we not?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, in time," said the old woman, thinking that she would take plenty of time to it—"come then, come along with me."

"Louise, without a fear of what she was to suffer through the old woman's fiendishness, said confidingly:

"I trust myself to you, madam."

"You couldn't do better, for you have fallen into good hands."

And the old woman led the blind girl to her vile den, and the sister, who had been stolen, was still in the power of her abductors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOME OF THE FROCHARDS.

MOTHER FROCHARD led Louise along the streets in a careful manner, although, had the poor girl not been so engrossed with the thoughts of the loss she had just sustained, she would have noticed that although they walked in a leisurely manner through those streets that were evidently deserted, the old woman quickened her pace very perceptibly whenever they approached any traveler.

For some moments neither La Frochard nor Louise spoke. The one was thinking of the prize she had found, and of the best means of making her serve her purpose, while the other was thinking of the sister she had lost.

Now it was not Mother Frochard's custom to walk through the streets in this quiet manner; for she was a professional beggar and her monotonous, nassal cry of "charity, good people. Charity for a poor old woman," was well known in the quarters which she frequented. But on this occasion she did not wish to let Louise know what her business was, and again she did not wish to attract attention, as she feared it might excite suspicion if she was observed with the neatly dressed, innocent-looking country girl.

"Have you always been blind, my dear?" she asked, in what was intended to be a kind, motherly voice.

"Oh, no, madam," replied Louise. "I have only been blind two years."

"Two years!" repeated La Frochard; "and what caused you to lose your sight?"

"I was very sick with a fever and something seemed to grow over my eyes," replied Louise, sadly, as she thought of that time when she was thus shut out from the world and imprisoned, as it were, within herself.

"I don't suppose there is any chance of your ever being cured, is there?" asked the old woman, with the view of finding out whether there was any chance of the girl's being able to leave her motherly (?) care.

"Henriette thinks that I may be cured, there are so many skillful physicians in this great city," answered Louise, with the tears filling her eyes again as she was thus so vividly reminded of her sister. "She sold all we possessed to raise money enough to pay the doctors."

"So you had some property then?"

"A very little, madam: When our dear parents died they left to us the little cottage in which we lived. But how much farther have we to go?"

And Louise's voice as she asked the question told plainly how weary she was.

"Only a few steps, my dear. We are poor people and cannot live in fine houses, so we have a little house by the river. But courage," said the old woman, patting her on the shoulder. "We shall soon be there."

Wearily the blind girl followed her guide. She was entirely worn out by the excitement and fatigues of the day, and any shelter, however humble or poor, would have been gladly welcomed by her.

"We shall find my sister in the morning, shall we not, madam?" asked Louise for the second time.

"It may take some days," replied Mother Frochard, evasively. You must try not to think of her to-night."

A prayer went up from the poor girl's heart that her sister might be speedily restored to her, and she silently followed the old woman.

After they had walked, as it seemed to Louise, many miles, Mother Frochard stopped before a house which from outside appearance, had formerly been a boat-house. It was in the last stages of decay, and the whole surroundings seemed a fit abode for crime.

"Here we are, my dear; here we are at last!" said the old woman as she led Louise through a long, dark passage, and then down several damp, mouldy steps, and left her standing in a small entry, reeking with noisome odors, while she fumbled in her capacious pockets for the key.

The door was opened at last, and the two entered a large square room, the furniture of which was of the rudest description. Two large, barn-like doors which opened on the water-front, and which were barred with heavy wooden bars, shew that at some very remote time the building had been used, as its outside appearance indicated, for a boat-house.

A flight of steps led from the center of the room to what was probably the garret; but several straw beds in one corner of the room, shew that the lower floor was the only portion of the house which was used.

Louise shuddered as she entered the damp, disagreeable-smelling room; but her feelings would have been much worse could she have seen the vile place, and the gleam of triumph which shone on the old woman's eyes as she saw that she had her prize securely caged.

"Sit down here," said La Frochard, "and I will get you something to eat."

And the old woman led Louise to a chair, where, by placing her hands on her shoulders, she forced her to be seated.

"I do not care to eat, madam," said Louise, piteously. "If you will allow me to go to my room I will retire."

"Go to your room?" cried Mother Frochard, in a hard, shrill voice from which all the assumed tenderness had fled. "Do you think we keeps an inn?" And the old wretch stood, with her hands on her hips, before the poor girl who shrank from before the mocking words as from a blow.

"I—did—did not know, madam," she faltered. "I was very weary, and wanted to retire."

"Well if you want to go to sleep, you can do that over here," and the old woman led her towards the beds in the corner. "These are good enough for my handsome Jacques, and I guess they will do for you, my fine lady."

"Anything will do for me, madam," said Louise in a conciliatory tone. "I did not know you were so poor; but Henriette will pay you to-morrow when we find her."

And with a sigh of thankfulness for the resting place, poor and wretched as it was, Louise sank upon one of the dirty straw beds, dressed as she was, and, after having uttered her child-like prayer, sank into a profound slumber.

"Yes, your sister will pay me for my trouble after we have found her, my fine lady," muttered La Frochard, as she seated herself by the side of a rude table, and from some one of its drawers produced a bottle of brandy.

Several copious draughts had the effect of changing the old woman completely, and she muttered to herself while she cast threatening glances at the young girl, who calmly sleeping, was all unconscious of the danger which surrounded her.

In about half an hour after La Frochard and Louise entered the house, and while the old woman was still communing with the brandy bottle, a loud bustle was heard in the passage just outside the door.

Mother Frochard listened intently, and gazed toward the bed, as if to see whether the noise would wake the girl, until several loud curses in a well known voice, caused a complacent smile to appear upon her face, and she leaned back in her chair, saying:

"It's Jacques, my handsome Jacques."

At the same moment, with a drunken swagger, Jacques entered the room.

"Well, my boy, what luck?" asked his mother as she gazed admiringly upon him.

"The worst of luck," answered Jacques, sullenly, as he seated himself upon a low stool, and began filling his pipe. "Marianne has deceived me."

"Deceived you! Oh, the wretch!" exclaimed the old woman in a tone that told plainly what Marianne might expect if she should get her in her grasp once. "But how did she deceive you?"

"She gave herself up to the guard. I told her to find a purse, and after she had done it, she gave herself up to get away from me, as she said."

Just then Louise made a movement in her sleep, which attracted Jacques' attention.

"Hello! What have you got here?" he asked, as he went toward the bed.

Mother Frochard related the story of how she found Louise, and when she had concluded, Jacques gave vent to his satisfaction in a prolonged whistle.

"What do you mean to do with her?" he asked at length, still gazing upon the beautiful face of the sleeping girl.

"She shall go out with me and sing; the money will come in fast enough then, I'll warrant," replied the old woman betaking herself once more to her bottle.

"Hello, it's full again, is it?" said Jacques, as he reached over and taking the bottle from his mother's hand, took a draught which was both long and deep.

Mother and son, as they sat there, with all the brutality in their hard natures aroused by the fiery liquid they had drank, were a well mated couple, and Louise seemed as much out of place in their den, as a lily of the valley would in the midst of fungus.

The evening meal had been prepared, and nearly dispatched when Pierre, looking faded and sorrowful, entered the hut with his wheel strapped upon his back.

Neither his mother or Jacques paid any attention to him as he entered, and he went quietly to the further end of the room to leave his wheel, when he was arrested by the sight of the sleeping girl.

With a low cry expressive of delight he stopped and gazed at her lovely face. Then leaving his wheel in its accustomed place he returned to the bedside, and kneeling down looked at her much as a pilgrim might at the Mecca of his faith.

"Look at the cripple," said Jacques to his mother, and then both broke into a coarse laugh, which aroused him from his worship.

He eat the fragments which had been left by his mother and Jacques, silently, and then commenced to do some work which he had brought home with him, while the other two began a night of drinking which was the rule rather than the exception.

The morning came, and with it the first intimation to poor Louise of what her life would be.

She was aroused by the heavy hand of Mother Frochard, who pulled her roughly to a standing position.

"Get up my fine lady, get up and try to earn your own living. You don't think that we can keep you in idleness, do ye?" said the old wretch in a voice which was yet thick from the effects of the previous night's dissipation.

For a moment Louise could not understand where she was, or what had happened, and then like a flood the remembrance of her loss rushed over her.

She could make no repiy; indeed she only half understood what had been said to her, and sitting down on the edge of the bed she commenced to weep.

Pierre and Jacques were watching the proceedings. The former with a look of pity and compassion, and the latter with amusement.

"Now then!" exclaimed the old woman as she dragged the girl to her feet again. "Can you sing?"

Louise did not repiy, but wept more violently.

"Can you sing?" screamed the old hag, at the same time grasping the poor girl by the arm in a manner which caused her to wince with pain.

"Yes, yes, madam," replied Louise in affright.

"Well, I wants yer to come out with me, and earn your living."

"How madam?"

"How? Why by singing in the streets to be sure."

"I cannot, madam, I cannot," exclaimed the poor girl piteously. "You said we should find my sister today."

"It will take many days to find your sister, I'm thinking," snarled La Frochard, "and you've got to help your friends."

"You mean for me to beg?" gasped Louise.

"No, my lady. You do the singing and I'll do the begging."

Louise cowered down upon the bed like one stricken with a blow.

"You'll have to take that out of her," laughed Jacques, who was enjoying the spectacle.

"But you promised her that you would find her sister," said Pierre, hastily wiping the tears away from his eyes, and starting to his feet.

"Oh, ho, master cripple, who told you to speak? Go sit down," said Jacques, dealing the lame boy a violent blow which sent him reeling to the further end of the room.

"Now then," said Mother Frochard, who had brought an old dress and a pair of shoes to the weeping girl; "you will take off your fine clothes, and put these on. They will become you much better."

"Madam!" exclaimed Louise, falling on her knees before the old woman. "I pray you to help me find my sister. Madam, for the love of Heaven help me, or I shall go mad."

A coarse laugh from La Frochard and Jacques, drowned Pierre's pitying exclamation.

"Don't waste any time with her, mother," said Jacques.

"That I won't," said the old woman. "Now, look here, I am willing to help you find your sister; but that will take time, and you've got to go with me to do something towards supporting the family first."

And the fiend in woman's form began to unloose the blind girl's clothes, preparatory to changing them for the rags which she intended for her to wear.

"Do not force her to beg, mother," pleaded the lame boy.

"Shut up!" was Jacques brutal order, at the same time threatening him with his hand. "The girl has got to beg, and that's the end of it, we'll find her sister when we get ready."

These words, and the tone in which they were uttered, showed Louise why these people had taken her to their home, and she resolved not to submit to the indignity.

"I will not beg!" she exclaimed, while the color rose to her cheeks. "You may kill me, but I will not beg. I will ask the first person I meet to save me from your vile hands."

"She's got quite a temper," sneered Jacques, "and when it's roused she's quite decent looking."

"Very well, my lady; very well. I'll soon break you of that. You'll want to beg or do anything else before you've been in the garret very long."

And seizing the poor girl as though she had been an infant, she carried her to the filthy hole under the roof.

"Oh, do not leave me here alone," screamed Louise in affright, as her quick ear caught the sound of the enormous rats as they scampered away at their approach, and the odors as if of decayed flesh greeted her. "I shall die, I shall die!"

And she struggled vainly in the old woman's strong grasp.

"Oh, mother, have mercy upon her. Do not shut her up in that filthy place. It will kill her!" implored Pierre, as he endeavored to rush up the steps to the poor girl's aid.

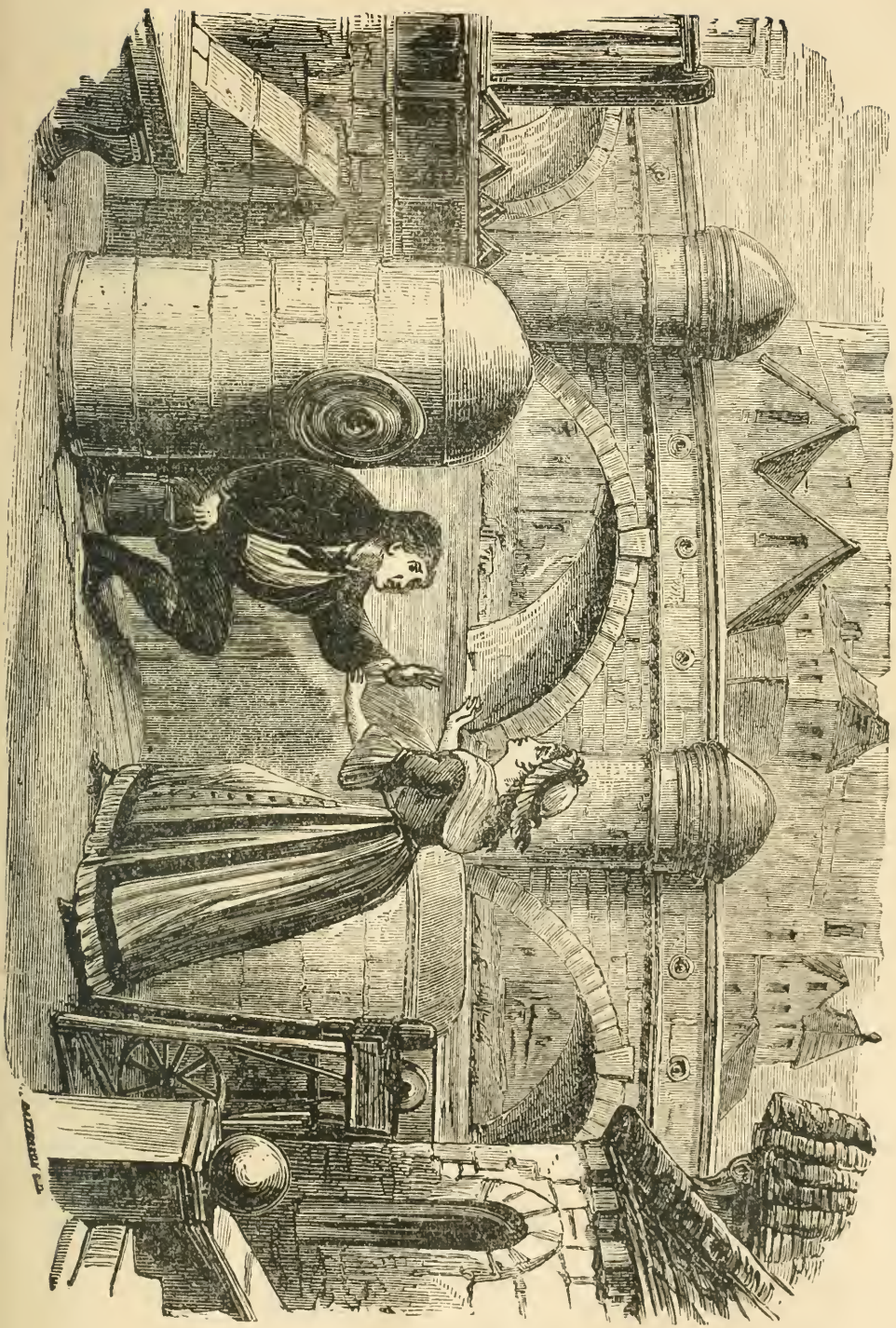
"Go back, cripple," laughed Jacques, at the same time giving the boy a blow which laid him senseless on the floor. "Go on, mother," he said to the old hag. "A few days there will do her good."

La Frochard had no idea of what the word pity meant, and she thrust the blind girl, who was already nearly dead with fright at the horrors she could not see, but only imagine, into the vile hole, and locked the door.

CHAPTER VII.

GARDEN OF BEL-AIR.

THE Marquis de Presles had told Lafleur to carry Henriette to Bel-Air, and we will visit those gardens



Another step and the poor blind Louise would have been dashed upon the rocks below.

on the same evening that the beautiful orphan was abducted.

The scene there was a brilliant one, well illustrating the pleasures of the nobles of France about the beginning of the present century.

A small garden had been made in the midst of a natural grove, which was shut out from the curious gaze of the world by several small cottages or chalets, decorated in the highest style of art, and which served the Marquis de Presles as a retreat, where, free from intrusion, that profligate nobleman could enjoy the society of boon companions, who, like himself, lived only for the present and its pleasures.

On this particular evening the gardens were illuminated, and a large party of so-called ladies and gentlemen were assembled to do full honor to the entertainments for which the marquis was celebrated.

As we attempt to pass within the inclosure, we are stopped by a numerous crowd of lackeys, who demand to see our card of admission, and failing to produce such a passport, we are told that we are not allowed even near the gardens, while all efforts to induce any of them to present our cards to the master of this retreat are equally unavailing, as they declare that their orders are most positive, and we must go quietly away or be forced to go. Thus jealously does the Marquis guard his retreat from importunate creditor or unwelcome friend.

Inasmuch as we only visit Bel-Air in fancy, we can bid defiance to the Marquis's orders, and enter without his permission.

Around the tables which are placed in the garden, a number of ladies and gentlemen are seated, drinking wine while they discuss the latest court news, or the most interesting scandal.

"Well, what do you think of my retreat from the whirl and bustle of Paris?" asked the Marquis of his vis-a-vis, who was a dashing sort of beauty.

"My dear Marquis," replied that lady. "I am delighted. It is a satisfaction to find a gentleman who maintains the customs of his rank."

"And yet there are fools who want to change them," exclaimed a young nobleman from the opposite table.

"You are right—fools, fools," answered De Presles as he motioned to the servants for more wine.

"By the way," asked the lady who had first spoken, "have you heard the news?"

As no one had heard anything particularly new for the past two hours, she continued by saying:

"They say that the new minister of police is as hard as a stone, and cold as a fish. He is going to put a stop to all our amusements, and, Marquis, this may be the last entertainment you will give at Bel-Air."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the host. "I'd like to see the minister of police who would dare to interfere with the pleasures of a French nobleman. Who and what is he?"

"He is from Touraine; is called the Count de Linieres, and is the uncle of the Chevalier Maurice de Vaudrey."

"Where is the Chevalier?" suddenly asked one of the ladies, as she was thus reminded of one of whom report had described as rather an eccentric, and on whom she wished to exercise her charms. "You promised me I should see him, Marquis."

"So I did, and I expect him, as well as another guest. I warn you ladies, that she will be a rival to you all."

"Who is this other guest?" was the question that assailed him from all quarters.

"A young lady," answered the marquis, as if enraptured at the thought. "Sweet sixteen, beautiful as a rose, and innocent as an angel."

"Where did you find such a pearl?" asked one of the ladies banteringly.

"In Normandy."

This announcement was followed by a general laugh.

"Yes, I know these Normandy beauties, with caps six feet high," laughed one of the ladies, betraying in spite of herself a tinge of jealousy in her voice.

"In wooden shoes," added another of the fair ones, "and hair plaited down her back."

"Laugh away, ladies," said De Presles gaily. "You shall see a Norman beauty in a high cap, wooden shoes and all, and then see how jealous you will all become at sight of her."

At this moment a voice was heard from the outside, and in the midst of some confusion a rather singular voice was heard saying:

"I tell you I *must* go in, and I *will*. I must speak to your master."

On hearing this the marquis went toward the entrance and demanded of the servants who it was that was so importunate.

"Picard," answered the owner of the singular voice. "Picard, valet to the Chevalier De Vaudrey."

The marquis immediately gave orders that he be admitted, and a sharp, wiry-looking fellow, wearing the De Vaudrey livery, stood before the gay party.

"Most excellent marquis, and most beautiful ladies," said he in an affected tone, and with a low bow, which was received with laughter, "I am very sorry; but my master asks you to excuse him."

"Excuse him?" echoed one of the ladies—"why, he promised——"

"I did the promising," answered Picard, with another of his sweeping bows. "He said he did not know whether he could come or not; but thinking I could persuade him I promised for him."

"Then you took a great liberty," said De Presles, and he ought to punish you for it."

"Certainly he ought," answered Picard, blandly: "I wish he would; but alas! my master is not like other masters. In fact, he is no master at all."

Seeing looks of incredulity at his statement, Picard continued in a most solemn manner:

"It is so, gentlemen. He spends his nights in pleasure as a young nobleman ought; but his days—what do you suppose he does with his days?"

"Sleeps of course," answered the marquis in a positive tone.

"Gentlemen, allow me to tell you confidentially," said the valet mysteriously, as the gentlemen gathered around him fully expecting to hear of some treason. "He works! actually works. He sits down and reads and writes as though he were a lawyer's clerk."

"Bah!" exclaimed one. "You don't expect us to believe that."

"Yes, and more too," answered Picard, who enjoyed immensely being able to impart some information to his superiors. Why, how do you suppose he acts to the common people, who want to see him? His creditors for instance?"

"Why, if they are importunate, he beats them, I suppose," answered De Presles, with whom this method of settling his bills was a common occurrence.

"Yes, he beats them," sneered Picard; "he pays them! Yes, gentlemen he pays his trades-people," and the valet surveyed the group, enjoying the surprise which he had given them.

"Oh! the poor fellow is lost!" exclaimed one of the party, who at the age of twenty had spent a large fortune, and was now living by his wits.

"Completely," affirmed Picard, "and all owing to the company he keeps. He won't be guided by me."

"Perhaps he is right in that," said De Presles. "But where is the attraction elsewhere to-night?"

"I will tell you, gentlemen," said a deep voice near the entrance to the gardens, and looking up all saw the Chevalier de Vaudrey himself.

He was a noble-looking man, with none of the fopperies and evident attempt at display which characterized some of his companions, and a careful observer would instantly have said that he was, in mental endowments, far above the average.

"What is all this that Picard has been telling us,

that you were not coming?" asked De Presles in surprise.

"I did not expect to come, so sent him with my regrets," answered the chevalier, as he accepted a glass of wine which was handed to him.

"And now he brings them himself," said Picard in a low voice as he left the garden hastily, lest his master might hear of the disclosures he had been making.

The conversation became general, and before long the orgie was at its height, when a noise was heard at the entrance and Lafleur appeared.

After whispering a few words to the marquis, he received the order:

"Let her be brought in here,"

Lafleur immediately retired, and returned in a few moments, followed by four men who bore a sort of litter, on which was the inanimate form of Henriette.

She lay like one dead; without motion or color, and save for the sound of stentorian breathing, she was to all appearance a corpse.

Into the midst of some of the most dissolute Parisian society, had the poor, innocent, unprotected girl been brought; with no one to aid her, and even those of her own sex who were by, would enjoy her sufferings rather than do anything to save her from the fearful doom that was so near.

What a terrible change for the two orphans, who, scarcely twenty-four hour previous, were light hearted maidens, setting out from their childhood's home to visit the beautiful city about which they had heard so much.

Now one was in the power of low, vile wretches, and the other in the hands of those who called themselves gentle people; but who had no more mercy, in fact, not as much as the Frochards.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAVED FROM DISHONOR.

Like a lily half broken from its stem lay Henriette upon the litter, surrounded by the revellers who had gathered near to see the Norman beauty.

Under the influence of the drug which had been administered, she remained unconscious of the rude jest which was uttered, and the coarse laugh of triumph which greeted her arrival.

Only one of that gay party was without curiosity respecting her appearance.

That one was the chevalier Maurice de Vaudrey.

He passed by her as she was brought in, and seeing what it was that lay upon the litter, contented himself with remarking:

"A young girl! The sport has been good."

Then resuming his seat he waited listlessly until some disposition should be made of the game which had been so bravely captured.

"Ah, is this our threatened rival?" asked one of the females, after looking, not without a feeling of envy, at the pale features of the abducted girl.

"Why, she has fainted," remarked another, in a sarcastic voice.

"Sleeping, my dear," said the first, "it's much more becoming."

At this lively sally of wit, a general laugh went around the company

"I'll wager that her eyes are but half closed, and that she is laughing to herself at all the trouble you are taking," said the cynical De Vaudrey, who had, years before, lost all faith in woman kind.

And it is little wonder that in that dissolute age, an honest, noble-minded man should have believed womanly purity to be a fable of the past.

"What do you think of my treasure?" asked De Presles, who had been gloating his sensual eyes upon the form of the fair girl, who was thus in his power.

"She has a very ordinary face," said one of the ladies (!) who prided herself upon her beauty.

"An exceedingly common person, as you can tell by her feet," said another, as she tried to display her own dainty foot, which she took the greatest delight in showing.

"Her arms and hands are like a washerwoman's," was the kindly remark of a bold looking blonde, who had exposed as much of her own arms as possible.

"Chevalier, your opinion," asked the bankrupt nobleman, who liked a bit of sarcasm, and not being able to say it himself, knew that it would be sure to come from the eccentric De Vaudrey.

"It's a lovely face; distinguished air; with the hands and feet of a duchess," replied the chevalier, without taking the trouble to look at the object of his criticism.

"But you have not seen—" De Presles eagerly began to say.

"No," answered De Vaudrey, coolly. "But I have heard those young ladies."

The young nobleman who had provoked this remark was delighted; but the ladies who had thus freely given their opinions favored him with a glance which lacked not the will to wither and blast the instigator of this reflection upon their remarks.

"Isn't she going to wake up?" asked one, in order to cover her confusion.

"Oh, yes," said the marquis, as he took a small, delicately chased silver flask from his pocket. "A few drops of this on the handkerchief will be sufficient to revive her."

The marquis poured a few drops of the liquid upon the priceless lace handkerchief which he held in his hand, and was about to apply it when the desire to heighten the effect caused him to stop.

"What will she say when she comes to her senses?" he asked, much as though he were speculating upon the probable actions of some strange animal rather than a weak, defenseless girl.

The young bankrupt nobleman looked at the Chevalier, as if hoping that he would answer that question, and he was not disappointed.

"What will she say when she comes to her senses?" repeated De Vaudrey, as though it was a useless question, the answer of which every one knew. "As though we did not know by heart the everlasting phrases of these willingly abducted maidens. When the proper moment arrives she will wake up and go through it all."

Bursting into a flood of imaginary tears the Chevalier proceeded to give an imitation of the kind of cries indulged in by maidens who, as he said, had been abducted by their own wishes.

"Where am I?" he continued, in a crying voice. "Why have you brought me here? What is it you wish?—Great Heavens!—ah! my mother!"

Then resuming his natural tone he added:

"Then by slow degrees this profound and virtuous despair, which commenced in a torrent of tears, will be drowned in—a flood of champagne."

All present joined in a hearty laugh at De Vaudrey's imitation of what they themselves had seen many times.

"Let us see whether the Chevalier has remembered the exact words," said the young lady who had expressed such an ardent wish to see the Chevalier. "Let me wake her, marquis."

De Presles gave her the handkerchief which he had saturated with the liquid, and she proceeded to try its effects upon the unconscious Henriette.

All present, except De Vaudrey, gathered round to enjoy the confusion of the Norman beauty, when she should awake to find herself in the midst of the gay party, and the young lady who had received the handkerchief from the marquis applied the restorative.

Henriette had inhaled the pungent odor but a moment when she showed signs of returning consciousness.

"Look! her eyes open," exclaimed the one who was thus bringing her to a sense of her misery.

Henriette opened her eyes in a dazed sort of way, like one, who, accustomed to the darkness, is suddenly exposed to the blinding glare of the sunlight.

She arose to a sitting posture, mechanically, and surveyed those around her. For some moments she did not seem to understand where she was, or what had happened.

"Am I mad?" she asked, in amazement at the view which met her gaze. "Do I dream?" and clasping her hands to her head, she endeavored to recall the events which had passed.

"Chevalier, that is not exactly the old way," said the young lady who had awakened Henriette to De Vaudrey.

"No, that is singular," said the chevaler, with his habitual sneer. "It is rather an improvement."

By degrees the abducted girl remembered what had happened, and almost in a flash, she understood where she was.

Springing suddenly to her feet, she confronted the marquis.

"Monsieur," she said, "has this outrage been committed by your orders? Is this your house?"

With a simpering smile upon his thin lips, the marquis approached the now thoroughly enraged girl.

"Ah, mademoiselle, I see you do me the honor to recognize me," he said, bowing low, and, as it seemed to the poor girl, in mockery.

"It was I who——"

"Not another word, sir," said Henriette, firmly, and at the same time, as though she believed her wishes would be obeyed, "I wish to return this very instant to the place where my sister awaits me. Come, sir, at once give your servants orders to take me back."

De Presles made no movement towards giving the necessary orders, and Henriette continued in a tone of command:

"You must—do you hear me, sir?—you shall," and from tones of command her voice unconsciously sank into a plaint, that was at once thrilling and pitiful.

It would require something more than the tone of the voice, touching as it was, to move the marquis from his purpose; and with his courtly grace, which seemed in the present case a mockery, he said to Henriette:

"Mademoiselle, after all the trouble we have taken to bring you here you can scarcely suppose we will let you go so soon."

For a moment Henriette regarded him earnestly, while the tears, unbidden, came into her eyes.

"I see the horrible trap you have laid for me; but vile as you are you can scarcely understand the extent of your own villainy," she said in a voice which she vainly tried to render firm. "You have separated me from a poor child whose only help in life I am; whose misfortune commands the respect of criminals, even worse than yourself. She is dependent on me alone; without me she cannot take a single step, for she is blind." And the wail of utter desolation which accompanied these words would have touched the heart of a savage.

"Blind?" they exclaimed, as the words arrested the merry laugh and broad jest, while the females expressed in their faces the compassion they now began to feel for the poor girl.

"Yes, blind and alone!" continued Henriette, now so carried away by the intensity of her feelings that her voice resembled more the wail of a lost soul than anything human. "Alone in Paris, without money, without help, wandering through the streets, sightless, homeless, wild with despair."

The picture which her mind had conjured up was too much for Henriette; she could control herself no longer, and she burst into a flood of tears.

"What will become of her!" she sobbed, half to herself, and with the question came again the maddening thought that she was powerless to assist her, and she turned again to the almost stupefied revellers.

"She is blind!" repeated Henriette with vehemence. "Gentlemen, do you hear me? She is blind!"

"Oh, this is too horrible!" exclaimed the Chevalier de Vaudrey, who still seated by the table was greatly moved by Henriette's words of despair and entreaty.

The Marquis read from the faces of his guests, that their sympathies were going out towards his victim, and as far as his small soul would permit he became generous.

"Oh, well, compose yourself, mademoiselle," he said in a studied voice. "I will give orders to have search made for her. My people will find her, and bring her here."

"Bring her here?" exclaimed Henriette, while all the anger in her gentle nature was aroused by the insulting proposal. "She in this house? never!" Then clasping her hands, she asked piteously: "Is this the only answer you have to my prayer?"

The poor girl saw no signs of relenting on the cold, hard face before her, and with all the dignity and passion of a pure woman who is insulted, she turned for a last appeal to those around her.

"Is there no one here," she asked, "who dares to raise a voice against this man? Is there not among all these men one gentleman?"

"You are mistaken, mademoiselle," said De Presles in a voice which he vainly endeavored to make dignified. "We are all noblemen and gentlemen."

The utter hollowness of these terms, as used by the Marquis in comparison with his present mode of action, aroused all of the Chevalier's scorn and contempt.

He dashed his glass, which he was just raising to his lips, to the ground, and rose to his feet.

"Then among all these noblemen and gentlemen," once more appealed Henriette, "is there not one man of honor?"

"There is; mademoiselle!" exclaimed De Vaudrey, going towards her with an angry flush upon his face, caused by De Presles' brutal conduct. "Take my hand, we will leave this place."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, monsieur, a thousand thanks!" exclaimed Henriette, as she took the proffered hand, and grasped it fervently, as a drowning man would the friendly rope, thrown to save him.

The marquis was so astonished by De Vaudrey's interference, that for a moment he was unable to offer any objection to this answer to his victim's prayer, and the Chevalier had conducted Henriette nearly to the garden entrance, before De Presles recovered from his stupor.

He rushed in front of the two and barred their exit.

"Excuse me, Chevalier, this is my house," he said in a voice hoarse with rage, "and I do not permit——"

"Give me room, sir," said De Vaudrey in a haughty voice.

"I will not allow this insult. Do you hear?" he asked as the loud chimes of a clock proclaimed the hour of midnight. "After twelve o'clock no one ever leaves this house."

"Then we shall be the first to do so, answered De Vaudrey in a cool tone. "Stand aside, sir."

"Do you know, Chevalier," said the marquis, white and trembling with rage, "that you speak to me as though I were your lackey?"

"I would not speak to a lackey who acted as you do," replied the Chevalier in a contemptuous tone. "I would cane him."

"Enough, monsieur; you are more than insolent!" exclaimed De Presles drawing his sword, and standing on the defensive. "Attempt to pass me and——"

"I certainly shall," interrupted De Vaudrey, "and this young lady with me."

Henriette clung to the arm of her protector in affright, while the other occupants of the garden gathered around the two men, and vainly attempted to quell the impending duel.

"Stand back gentlemen," commanded the marquis in a rough voice. "After such an insult there is but one course," and stepping into a cleared space at the back of the garden he awaited the chevalier.

Nor did he have long to wait. Conducting Henriette to a retired spot near him, De Vaudrey drew his sword, and without any other preparation began the combat.

Pale with terror Henriette saw these preparations; but she could only clasp her hands, and with a whispered prayer to Him who has said: "Thou shalt not kill," breathlessly awaited the result of the duel.

Both men were experienced swordsmen; but from the first De Vaudrey had the advantage owing to his coolness, and he contented himself with parrying the wild thrusts of the infuriated marquis.

At length a lunge more careless than the others, gave the chevalier the opportunity he awaited, and with a quick, rapid thrust he ran his sword through the body of his antagonist.

The marquis reeled for a moment as the sword was withdrawn, and then with a low groan sank into the arms that were outstretched to receive him.

Without deigning to cast a look upon his fallen foe, De Vaudrey raised his hat with courtly grace, and offered his hand to Henriette, who was almost bewildered by the rapidity with which the combat had been finished.

Never before had she seen a human being stricken down by a violent death, and she could not repress a passionate look upon the body of the young man who had so lately been her worst enemy; but whose life blood was now slowly welling out from the narrow wound in his chest, and slowly dropping upon the graveled walks.

De Vaudrey took the girl's hand kindly in his own, and saying:

"Come, Mademoiselle, we are now free to go," led her out of the vile place from which she had been released only by the interposition of death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLIND GIRL'S SUFFERINGS.

THE garret into which La Frochard's cruelty and love for gain had consigned Louise, was a place to make even the stoutest heart quail.

Imagine a low, narrow room, reeking with odors from decaying wood and rags, and damp from the mists which arose from the Seine, and penetrating every crack and crevice, caused the unhappy inmate to shiver with dread, as it struck by a blast from a charnel house.

The blind girl's sufferings were fearful. For a moment all would be quiet as the tomb, and then, startled by some unusual noise, the rats which infested the dismal place would scamper from their hiding-places, causing Louise to shrink with fear from the almost unearthly noise of which she knew not the meaning.

Her imagination, vivid as it is in the blind, peopled the fearful place with terrors which were intensified by being unseen.

During the hours of the day, and the yet more dreary ones of the night, poor Louise crouched close to the low roof, trembling at every new noise caused by the wind or waves, and even praying that she might be visited by her brutal captors; for, much as she dreaded them, the sound of a human voice would be a relief to her over-taxed nerves.

After what seemed to her to be many days, but was in reality little more than twenty-four hours, Louise heard the sound of heavy footsteps on the stairs, and immediately after, the door was unlocked, and a man entered.

The voice which she heard told her plainly that it was Jacques who had visited, and much as she feared him, she gladly welcomed his coming.

Instinctively she knew that he was gazing upon her, and before he spoke she sank upon her knees before him in an attitude of supplication.

"If you have any pity in your heart—if you ever knew what it is to suffer—take me from this fearful place."

The tears which rolled down her pale cheeks showed how intense was her agony; but it had no effect upon the wretch before her.

A coarse, brutal laugh was the only answer to her pleadings, and she sank back upon the floor almost lifeless.

Villain as he was, Jacques saw that their victim could not survive her imprisonment many hours longer, for even as it was her day of terror had changed the rosy-cheeked Normandy girl as much as would many days of severe sickness.

The pallid cheeks, the deep dark circles under the eyes, and the marks of suffering that was to be read in every feature of her delicate face, told how severe had been her anguish.

"You are better fitted for your business now than you were before you came up here," said Jacques, as he exulted over the misery, and delighted in the pain, he had been the means of causing.

"Oh, take me away! take me away! I will do as you tell me!" she pleaded.

"Will you beg?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Well, come along then," and he grasped her by the arm, which was protected only by a thin covering of coarse cotton, with a force that caused her to scream with pain.

"Devilish tender, ain't you?" he asked with a chuckle, as he brutally dragged her toward the doorway.

"Well, is she willing to help her friends now?" asked the shrill tones of Mother Frochard's voice as Louise and Jacques appeared in the doorway.

"I guess she'll behave herself now," laughed Jacques, as he forced the blind girl to descend the stairs without any assistance from him.

"Oh, very well, very well, my fine lady," said the old woman as she led Louise to a seat near the table. "If you have been there long enough, I suppose you'd like something to eat, you ungrateful hussy."

"I am very hungry, madam," faltered Louise.

"Well, it's a good thing," snarled the old woman, "you'll know how to appreciate what you gets after this."

Jacques, seated astride of the chair, with his arms resting on the back, enjoying the scene with evident zest, while Louise listened anxiously for Pierre's sympathizing voice.

Let us leave this scene for a while, and follow Henriette while she accompanies her deliverer from the beautiful but vile garden of Bel-Air.

They had reached the street before Henriette ventured to speak to the chevalier of her gratitude for the assistance he had rendered her. Then in a voice trembling with emotion, she thanked him for his interferance, and begged of him to show her the way to the place where she had been robbed of her sister.

The distance was very great, and during the walk, the Chevalier De Vaudrey learned all of the history of the beautiful girl whom he had rescued from such a fearful fate; but in reply to her inquiries as to the probable fate of her sister he could not consciously lighten her heart.

"But I shall find her, shall I not, monsieur?" asked Henriette, looking up into his face with an imploring gaze.

For a moment De Vaudrey thought he would tell her how little chance there was for finding a lost girl immediately, unless some kind, honest people had taken compassion on her, and even then it would require several days. But as he looked into her beauti-

ful eyes, and saw there the hope and longing that was mirrored in them, he could not speak those words which would plunge her into despair.

Therefore he assumed a hopeful air which was very far from being sincere, and replied:

"We shall find your sister, mademoiselle; but you must not get discouraged if it takes several days, for we can hope to find no clue to where she has gone."

Louise was not satisfied with the answer; but she said nothing, and in a few moments more, they had reached the Normandy coach office.

The most persistent inquiry revealed nothing relative to Louise's whereabouts. No one had seen her except when she was with her sister, and it was with a heavy and sorrowful heart that Henriette was forced to relinquish the search until the morrow.

The chevalier conducted her to a boarding house, where, after a brief recital of Henriette's history, she was allowed to remain.

Need we recount the many long and fruitless searches of that faithful sister for the blind orphan? Can the reader not guess that, charmed by the beauty of face and mind of the beautiful Henriette, the Chevalier de Vaudrey was ready to fling away all dreams of wealth and kingly favor, and entreat the young girl to become his wife.

And why shall we describe all of Louise's sufferings for three long months? They were surely as would melt the heart of stone to pity, and yet her cruel captors shew no mercy.

Therefore we will pass over three months, during which, each day, to both the sorrowing orphans, brought the same sad story of misery and despair, and in our next chapter present a new scene to the reader.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINISTER OF POLICE.

THE newly appointed minister of police was the Count de Linieres, as we heard at the garden of Bel-Air.

He was the uncle, and until that young gentleman attained his majority, the guardian of the Chevalier Maurice de Vaudrey.

Count de Linieres was of a very old and proud family, but the hope of distinction induced him to accept of the high office tendered him by the king, who honored him for his sterling worth.

It is shortly after his accession to office, and before he is well acquainted with the intricate workings of its vast and complicated body over which he is the acknowledged head, that we present him to our readers.

A tall, portly old gentleman of some sixty years of age is he, and one who as a friend would be true, and as an enemy, implacable.

On this particular afternoon he has just dismissed several of his subordinates, and is now giving some necessary instructions to the chief clerk.

"I desire," said the count, "that there should be no relaxation in the severity of the police towards gambling dens, low drinking places, and other haunts of crime. Professional beggars, too, must be driven from the streets."

These orders were delivered in the tone of a man who, having weighed what he is about to say, expects to be obeyed.

"Their number increases daily," replied the clerk, with a gesture expressive of humility and deference.

"The king is desirous that a stop should be put to the scandals which disgraced the administration of the police during the preceding reign," continued De Linieres, speaking slowly. "Night brawls went unpunished, and abductions, bringing shame and disgrace upon many honest families, were of common occurrence. And apropos of that subject, I have here a report which needs an explanation. How is it possible that a young girl could be abducted in the open streets at eight o'clock in the evening, and there should be no one to oppose such an outrage?"

"There are scoundrels in Paris audacious and dexterous enough to do anything," replied the clerk, as if that were sufficient excuse for the short-comings of the detectives.

"Where were the police?" asked the count sternly.

"They have discovered the accomplices of the chief actor," said the clerk, trying to evade an answer to his chief's very pertinent inquiry, "and compelled them to confess."

"Three months have elapsed since this most daring outrage, and the really guilty ones, the instigators of the crime have not been punished," said De Linieres, with a look of reproach at his subordinate.

"That is due, my lord, to certain circumstances," was the answer, or perhaps we should say excuse.

"What circumstances?" said the count, in evident surprise that any circumstance should prevent the punishment of a crime where the perpetrators had been discovered. "To whom does this chateau of Bel-Air belong?"

"To the Marquis de Presles," answered the clerk.

"De Presles!" repeated the count. "An ancient and illustrious family whose last scion would not hesitate to stake all its glories on the cast of a die, or the thrust of a sword in a drunken brawl. But the girl—after the duel what became of her?"

"She was carried off by—by—by the antagonist, or the marquis," was the hesitating answer that roused the count's suspicions at once, and he asked quickly while he eyed the clerk with distrust:

"The name of the Marquis' opponent? What is it?"

"The Chevalier Maurice de Vaudrey," replied the clerk with reluctance.

"My nephew!" exclaimed the old gentleman in surprise, while an expression of pain passed over his face at the thought that his nephew, whom he loved so dearly, and whom he had supposed to be the soul of honor, should be engaged in what he supposed to be a drunken brawl.

After a moment's reflection, he turned to the old clerk who was regarding his chief with a look of sorrow, and said in a voice which was singularly soft and sweet for a man.

"I appreciate the sentiment that caused you to hesitate."

The clerk bowed low, and was turning away when the count stopped him.

"For the future, sir, remember that justice is no respecter of persons."

The chief's voice now was as harsh and commanding as it was before low and soft.

"Are you sure that it was the Chevalier de Vaudrey?"

"Quite sure. We have a list of all who were present—both gentlemen and ladies."

"These gentlemen," said De Linieres in an angry tone, "must be made to understand that such orgies will be tolerated no longer. It is not enough to bear a noble name; it must be borne worthily, and these *ladies* must choose between Salpetriere and exile."

"Do you wish, my lord, that this affair should be entered in the secret archives of the police?"

"The secret archives of the police?" asked the count, in great surprise that there should be anything of the kind. "Do such records really exist?"

"Certainly, my lord," replied the clerk, wondering not a little at the ignorance of his chief. "The secret and complete history of every noble family in France may be found there. You have but to mention a name and in five minutes the desired volume will be in your hands."

The count remained in deep thought for a few moments.

There had been in his house, as in every man's, a skeleton in the closet, and that skeleton was some secret sorrow which preyed upon his wife, who was a De Vaudrey.

If the old clerk's words were true, then here was an opportunity for him to discover what he had so long vainly sought.

Here he could, without humbling himself to any one, penetrate that mystery in his wife's life which she had so long, and so successfully concealed.

But it must be done at the expense of his honor, and at the moment there was a great struggle going on in his mind.

Should he avail himself of this information which his position entitled him to possess; but which his manhood revolted at?

At last it was decided in his mind. He would have the volume completed, and at some future time, when he should be more accustomed to the idea, he would refer to it.

"If the history of the house of De Vaudrey is there, let that history be completed," he said quickly, as it afraid to linger near the temptation any longer.

The clerk bowed low, and departed upon his mission and at the same time he went out, Picard, the magnificent, who allowed himself to be called valet to the Chevalier de Vaudrey, entered.

"Ah, Picard! I am glad that you have come. I wish to speak to you about your master. How is he behaving himself?"

Here was a chance for Picard which he was not disposed to let slip him, and after his extravagant bows, he answered in his peculiar voice:

"With all due respect, my lord, his conduct is scandalous, pertectly scandalous, and unbecoming a nobleman of his rank."

Picard looked for some expression of surprise upon his listener's face, and failing to see it there, continued in an injured tone, as if his master's behavior was a reflection upon him as a servant.

"Formerly he had a few gentlemanly associates, with whom he occasionally amused himself," said Picard, slowly. "And saw life, thereby giving me some opportunities. Alas! it is different now. For the last three months he has changed entirely. Indeed, my lord, my life has become so monotonous, that a man of spirit like myself cannot stand it any longer."

"Am I to understand that you wish to leave his service?" asked the minister, with a preoccupied look upon his face.

"Yes, my lord!" exclaimed Picard, eagerly. "The chevalier, your nephew, has principles which I can no longer accept. They clash with all my opinions, and although the chevalier thinks proper to compromise his nobility, I cannot compromise my livery," and a look of virtuous indignation was upon Picard's round face, giving it a very comical appearance.

"Very well," said De Linieres, "I will take you back into my service."

"You will!" exclaimed Picard in delight, and then giving a sigh of relief, and straightening himself up as far as his diminutive stature would permit, he added, "Ah, my lord, you have relieved me, and I resume my personal dignity."

"I will do as I have said on one condition, added the count, and at this Picard's face lengthened wonderfully." "I wish you to remain for a time with my nephew. It is important that I should know his movements. I could employ the police; but I have already learned too much from them, and through you, who are attached to him, I desire to know the rest."

"The rest?" echoed Picard, in amazement. "What has he been doing? What do the police know?" and now the valet's face brightened as he thought himself upon the verge of discovery of an escapade of his master's, which was all the faithful valet hungered for.

"They know that after the duel——

"The duel! What duel?" interrupted Picard, forgetting in his eagerness to know all, the respect due the minister of police.

"Do you pretend not to know that he killed the Marquis de Presles in a duel about a woman?" asked the count, while he regarded the valet with a piercing gaze.

"He fought a duel, and dangerously wounded his antagonist, and on account of a woman!" exclaimed Picard in an ecstacy of delight, that his master should be concerned in such affairs, while Picard considered the only proper thing for a nobleman to do. "Oh, the sly dog, and I wanted to leave him!"

"No, no, not yet," said the count quickly, catching the last of the valet's remark, without hearing the first. "I desire that you remain with him, and discover where he hides himself."

"Of course I will!" exclaimed Picard, now pertectly willing to remain with the chevalier any length of time. "I thought he would not disgrace the blood of a French nobleman. Certainly, I'll find out this saucy little beauty for whom he neglects all his friends," and he added in the tone of a connoiseur: "Of course she must be little and saucy, with a jaunty, piquant air. That's the style I like.'

"Oh, indeed," said the count in surprise.

"Doubtless he has done everything in good style," continued Picard, who in his ecstacy was impervious to everything but the one satisfactory idea that now engrossed all his thoughts. "He has probably taken some elegant, quiet, little house, the rooms hung in velvet, and furnished in silk and laces, with everything of the sort.'

"Why, at that rate you will ruin your master," said the count, surprised at this phase of Picard's character, which he had never seen before."

"If she's worth the trouble, where's the harm in a little ruin?" asked the valet innocently.

How much longer Picard would have continued to express his delight, and what he might not have said to further surprise the count, is a matter of conjecture, for at this moment the Countess de Linieres was announced, and the count at once dismissed Picard, with an injunction not to forget his orders.

"I will obey them, my lord," said the valet as he bowed himself out, and during his walk to his master's house, he muttered, to the infinite delight of the gamins who heard him. "Oh, Master Chevalier, you are a sly dog, and I thought you a saint."

As the countess entered, her husband greeted her affectionately, and conducted her to a seat.

"I was about to come to you," said the count, "but you have anticipated me. I desire to speak with you on the subject of your nephew, the Chevalier de Vaudrey, and to ask you to prepare him for the marriage which the king——"

"Wishes to impose on him," interrupted the countess bitterly

"Impose on him?" repeated De Linieres. "It is a magnificent alliance which will complete the measure of the distinguished honors with which his majesty deigns to favor us."

"Have you spoken to the Chevalier yet?"

"No; but I am expecting him every moment, and I wished to talk with him in your presence."

As if this conversation had some influence over him, De Vaudrey entered at this moment.

"Ah, Chevalier!" exclaimed the count, "I am glad to see you. The countess and myself have an important communication to make to you."

De Vaudrey looked at his uncle in surprise.

"My dear Maurice," said the count, after a moment's hesitation, "the king did me the honor to receive me yesterday, and he spoke of you."

"Of me?" asked De Vaudrey, in surprise

"He takes a great interest in you,' continued De Linieres, speaking quickly, and in a forced tone. He

Pale with terror, Henriette could only clasp her hands and breathlessly await the result of the duel.

wishes you to accept a position at court, and desires at the same time that you should marry."

As the count said this, he watched De Vaudrey's face with an intentness that was almost painful. He expected to know by this means whether the stories which appeared to be so well authenticated were true and he sincerely hoped that he might be able to believe them the fabrications of some enemy.

"Marry?" asked De Vaudrey, as though he could not believe his uncle really meant what he said.

The countess waited as anxiously for De Vaudrey's answer as did her husband, although from a different reason. She loved the young man before her, and his happiness and well being were very dear to her.

"My dear nephew," she said kindly. "I see that this news surprises you. Yet there is no fear that the king's choice will do violence to your feelings. The lady whom his majesty has chosen, has youth, beauty, and fortune."

"In proof of which, I have only to tell you that his choice is Mademoiselle——" the count attempted to say, but was interrupted by the chevalier.

"Do not name her," he said excitedly.

"Why not?" asked his uncle, in astonishment.

"Because I refuse to marry."

CHAPTER XI

THE SECRET.

The chevalier's emphatic refusal to marry filled his uncle with astonishment.

That any one in their right mind should refuse to accept of the means of advancement to the royal favor, when it was to be purchased by such a simple, and in the present case, such an agreeable means, was past the old gentleman's comprehension.

It required some little time for him to understand that his nephew had rejected the king's flattering proposals, and then his anger began to get the better of his surprise.

The Countess de Linieres, with a woman's ready wit, understood that there could be but one cause for such a decided refusal, and that must be that he was already in love.

The chavalier was the son of her sister, who had died several years previous to the opening of our story, and for that reason, as well as for his own noble qualities, she loved him as she would had he been her own son.

Understanding her husband's quick and variable temper, the countess darted a warning glance at De Vaudrey, which, if it was seen, was not heeded.

"Before committing yourself irretrievably, Chevalier de Vaudrey, reflect," said the count, in an angry tone. "I know the weakness of youth, and the temptations to which it is exposed. I also know that within certain limits it is well to close the eyes to faults, provided they are not too serious. This marriage is an honor which his majesty desires to confer upon you, and when the king has spoken——"

"I will go to the king," interrupted the chevalier, and speaking with great rapidity and earnestness, he added: "I will thank him for his goodness, I will place my services at his disposal. My devotion, my life are his; but my affections are my own, and I wish to remain—free."

"Free!" exclaimed the count, scornfully. "Free to lead a life of dissipation which you may not always be able to hide from the world."

These words which implied so much, stung the noble-hearted De Vaudrey more than any words of anger or reproach could have done.

"There is nothing in my life to hide," he said proudly, but impatiently, "nothing for which I have reason to blush."

"Are you sure of that, Chevalier?" asked the count in a tone that plainly said the speaker knew differently. Conscious of his own uprightness, this doubt cast upon his word was more than the chevalier could bear, and he advanced towards his uncle with a menacing air.

"Monsieur!" he began, hotly. "I cannot——"

"Maurice! my husband!" exclaimed the countess, as she stepped between the two men to prevent those words from being spoken which both would have afterwards deeply regretted. "Defer the conversation for the present. Permit me to speak to Maurice."

"Very well," said De Linieres, sternly. Then turning to the chevalier, he said in a voice which he had never before used to his nephew. "We will return to this another time. You will remember that, as head of the family, it's honor is confided to my care, and I will not suffer any one to sully it with a stain."

De Vaudrey had nearly lost all control of his temper, and in a moment the outbreak which the countess was so anxious to avoid, would have broken forth, had not the count, without giving his nephew time to speak, said quickly;

"I leave you with the Countess, and I hope that your respect and affection for her will cause you to lend more weight to her counsels than you are disposed to give to mine."

As if fearing that he might have tried the young man's temper too far; or that he did not wish to prolong a useless controversy, the count left the room as he finished the sentence, and Dr. Vaudrey was alone with his aunt.

The countess went up to the noble-looking young man, and taking his hands in her's, asked in a sweet, winning voice:

"Who is this woman you love? What obstacle prevents the avowal of your passion? If it is only a matter of fortune, take mine, it is all at your disposal and I will give it to you cheerfully."

"Ah! where shall I find a heart like yours?" exclaimed the chevalier in a voice trembling with emotion. "You have divined my secret. I love a young girl as charming as she is pure. I love her, yet my lips have never sought hers. I adore her, yet I have never dared to whisper my passion."

"Her name—her family?" asked the countess eagerly.

"She was born of the people," said De Vaudrey proudly, yet tenderly. "She is an orphan, and lives by the labor of her hands."

The countess, who had never for a moment imagined such an answer to her question, was surprised, and she showed plainly that grief was mingled with her surprise.

"And you would make such a woman your wife?" she asked reproachfully.

"Do not judge her until you have seen her," entreated the chevalier. "Consent to see her, and then advise me," and the young man took the countess' hands in his, and looked imploringly into her face.

But his aunt turned away from him with a gesture of sorrow.

"In such a marriage," she said, sadly, "there can be no happiness for you, and for her only misery. Believe me, I know the result of these unequal unions. You must renounce her. You owe obedience to your family, and to your king."

As the countess said these words, which, if they were obeyed, would doom the young man to give up all that the world held for him, she turned wearily away, and sank into a chair, as if the advice came only from the echo of her husband's words, and not from her own loving heart.

"Can you tell me that?" asked the chevalier in a tone of surprise. "You who have suffered so much, and who have been the victim to a blind obedience which has sacrificed your life, and made you miserable?"

"How do you know?" exclaimed the countess, springing from her chair as if De Vaudrey's words had struck directly to her heart, and in their passage had torn open wounds that the poor woman thought us

one save herself and the good God knew of. "Who told you this? Who has torn aside the veil from my secret, and revealed to you the cause of the anguish I have suffered for eighteen long years?"

The chevalier looked sadly upon the woman he had wounded so deeply by his words.

"There was but one soul in all the world tender and noble enough to appreciate and sustain your own in its trials," he said in a gentle voice that seemed to carry a balm with it. Your dearly beloved sister—my mother. In her last moments she exacted from me the promise to devote myself to you should misfortune ever come, and I gladly gave my word."

For a moment the countess stood as one suddenly deprived of speech, and then in a low voice, as if speaking to herself, she said:

"And she told you of my sufferings, my despair. Yes, yes, you speak the truth, my life has been one long sacrifice to duty," and resting her head on her hands, she allowed her thoughts to wander through all the dark and dreary avenues of the past, disturbing memories that slept only too lightly, and awakening sad recollections that she had struggled to bury; but which were ever ready to rise up against her, and assert their right to inflict sorrow with all the keenness of old.

"I was young and mad," she exclaimed, as rising from her feet she paced the long, magnificently-furnished rooms with a nervous step, while her rich robes trailed after her, rustling as if in mockery at her grief. "I loved and was loved," she continued hastily, much as though she was excusing herself to the young man who gazed in pity upon her, "and in my love I knew no wrong. I consented to a secret marriage with a man beneath me in rank."

The chevalier attempted to speak. He wished to check the tale of woe and sorrow which he knew she was about to relate; but she heeded him not, and continued in a voice which told of the anguish in her heart.

"Our secret was soon discovered," she said. "They thought him my lover, and killed him almost under my very eyes, and I became a mother."

De Vaudrey could not restrain the tears which overflowed his eyes, as the sorrowing woman, in a voice doubly touching by the pent-up emotion it betrayed, spoke those words which she never before had dared to utter.

"The family honor demanded that my child should disappear," she continued, while her voice grew hard and cold again. "Because my hand was promised to the Count de Linieres. The family honor demanded that I should deceive an honorable man, or sacrifice the life of my child. I bowed to the inflexible will of my father."

The mother's love and sorrow overpowered her, and her eyes, which had been so dry and hard, were now made tender by the blessed boon of tears.

"I prayed that God would have pity on the life of the little creature whom I had scarce embraced when they cruelly tore it from me," she continued, while the sobs escaped with the words. "I consoled myself with the hope that perhaps I should see it again some day. Alas! the days have passed into months, the months into years, and all my prayers are in vain."

"My poor aunt," said the chevalier, as he took her hand tenderly in his and endeavored in the caressing touch he bestowed upon it, to impart some of the sympathy and love he felt.

"So cruel, cruel, that I often ask myself if it would not have been better had they killed me too," said the poor woman, again pacing restlessly up and down the room. "Yes, yes, far more merciful than to have inflicted the punishment I have suffered for so many years. I dare not think she lives; for if she does, into what abyss may not my criminal abandonment have plunged her."

"Try not to let your mind rest upon those things, my poor aunt," said the chevalier, in a voice as low and sweet as a woman's.

The countess did not heed him.

The past had full power over her now, and her voice was strained as though it were not powerful enough to sustain the weight of emotion she put upon it.

"The horrible thought that, if living, she may accuse me of her misery, perhaps her shame. May she not cry out from the depths of her despair: 'Accursed be my unnatural mother!' Ah, I hear that frightful curse now ringing in my ears; it pursues me in my prayers, and torments me in my dreams. I hear it always, always," and her voice ended in such a wail of misery as could come only from a heart wrung to its utmost tension by despair.

And her last words were heard by one other whom in her wanderings in the past she had forgotten—her husband.

The Count de Linieres had waited in an adjoining room until he thought his wife must have said all she wished to, to the chevalier, and he returned, hoping that by adding some kind advice to what the countess had already said, he might be able so to influence his nephew, that he would accede to the king's wishes.

The heavy carpet had deadened the sound of his footsteps, and if he had made any noise, both the chevalier and his aunt were too much engrossed to have heard it.

As he heard his wife's last words, uttered in such accents of despair, he started in alarm, and astonishment rooted him to the floor, unable to move or speak.

What was this fearful sorrow of which he knew nothing? was the thought that flashed over him in an instant, and he remained, not in the attitude of a listener; but of a man paralyzed with fear, while, all unconscious of his presence, the two continued their conversation.

CHAPTER XII.

"I HAVE SAVED YOUR HONOR."

So carried away with his argument, was the Chevalier de Vaudrey, that the words came from his lips in an irresistible tide, carrying with them sorrow and pity to the woman whose past life was thus brought before her, and shame and anger to the man who had thus unconsciously learned of the one dark time in the history of the woman he loved.

"Then do you, who have suffered so much, who suffer still, counsel me to obey?" asked the chevalier eagerly. "Would you have me chain my life to one woman, while my heart is filled with the image of another, will you advise me to do this?"

Hard words were these for a husband to hear, especially when it was the first intimation he had of such suffering, and he showed in the deeply furrowed brow, the clenched hand, and the white trembling lips how deeply the blow had struck.

The picture De Vaudrey had presented to his aunt; the thought that her words might be the means of consigning the young man to the same sad fate which had been hers, swept away all the barriers of opposition, and she resolved that if it laid in her power, the sacrifice should not be made.

"No, no, never!" she exclaimed passionately. "You shall not marry other than the woman you love."

The count who had recovered from his first stupor of surprise, now came towards his wife, and had she not been in such extreme agitation, she would have seen that her husband had aged many years in the few moments he had been absent from the room.

When the countess saw him, she thought not of what he might have heard; she did not notice his appearance: but, so deeply was her woman's heart moved that she thought only of her nephew.

"Oh, Monsieur, have pity on him," she almost begged as, clasping her hands before her, she went to

wards her husband, "do not ask him to stifle the cry of his conscience. His heart revolts against the sacrifice you ask. Do not imitate those parents whose pride condemns their children to lives of falsehood and despair."

She would have said many things which would have but added fuel to the flame that was burning in the count's breast, had not the chevalier, stepping close to her whispered:

"Take care!"

"Madam!" exclaimed De Linieres, looking at her in surprise. "To whom do you refer? Of what are you speaking when you use the words, pride, falshood, despair."

Her husband's cool sarcastic words, uttered in a voice which chilled, recalled her to a sense of what she had said, and a deathly feeling came over her, causing her to seek the support of the chair.

The count looked at her fixedly, and she saw that some answer was required of her. In a voice scarcely audible, the unhappy woman faltered:

"I meant—I spoke of——"

'Monsieur," said the chevalier, anxious to shield the poor lady, "the words of the countess are but the echo of those she just heard me utter. They are the irrevocable revolt of my heart against the marriage and the suffering you would impose upon me.'

The Count de Linieres was far from being satisfied with the chevalier's explanation. Looking at his wife in a manner which showed that he did not believe what had just been told him, he asked in a cold, stiff voice:

"Had your words no other meaning, Madam?"

"No! no!" answered the countess, confusedly, as though she knew not the meaning of the words she uttered. "I am agitated, faint—you see, monsieur, I am ill."

"That is evident," answered the count in a voice which had in its tones no sympathy or emotion. Then turning to his nephew he ordered rather than requested: "Chevalier, conduct the countess to her room, and return immediately. I desire to speak with you."

With a compassionate look at his aunt the Chevalier offered her his arm and conducted her to her apartments.

Hardly had he left the room, when the minister, seating himself at his table, wrote a few words on a paper, and after having sealed it, rung the bell sharply.

The old clerk answered the summons, and to him the count handed the paper saying:

"Take this to the keeper of the secret records, and return with what he gives you."

Like a well-made automaton the clerk took the paper, made a stiff bow, and with a precise, mechanical manner left the room.

Left to himself, the envied Minister of Police gave way to the passion wave that had threatened to overwhelm him in the presence of his wife.

He paced the room in the same wild way that his wife had done but a few moments before, and watched impatiently for the return of his nephew.

At last the chevalier returned, and the look upon his face, showed plainly that he had nerved himself for the struggle which was inevitable.

"Chevalier," said the old gentleman, going up to De Vaudrey in an angry, nervous manner. "You can readily understand that propriety and considerations for my own dignity, induced me to accept the explanation made by you on behalf of the countess."

"Monsieur!" interrupted De Vaudrey, in an angry tone.

"You also understand that that explanation did not satisfy me," continued the count, not heeding the angry exclamation.

"Well, sir," said the chevalier, in a cool, irritating tone. "What are you pleased to think?"

"I think, sir," answered De Linieres, now almost beside himself with rage, "that the countess wept not for you; but for herself. You spoke of her own griefs, of her early life, which is shrouded in some dark secret, perhaps a guilty one, which weighs upon her conscience, and is the torment of her life and mine. Speak, chevalier, what is it?"

It was impossible for De Vaudrey to tell how much of the conversation the count had heard, and what reply to make.

He must shield his aunt from all suspicion of wrong; but how?

There was now but one way, and that to deny everything until he could know what had been overheard.

"Monsieur de Linieres," he began, in an angry tone, and purposely dropping the title.

"I command you to speak," interrupted the count, in a loud voice.

"I know nothing, monsieur," was the young man's brief answer.

"Very well, sir," was the angry rejoinder. "You choose to forget all you owe to me. Twice to-day have you refused obedience to my wishes, nay, to my commands. Nevertheless, I will know the secret which you refused to disclose."

"I am ignorant of the secret to which you refer," said De Vaudrey in a haughty voice.

The count was about to make an angry reply which would perhaps have opened a breach in their friendship which even time would be powerless to heal, when the clerk returned with the answer to the note.

He had with him a heavy volume bound with heavy clamps of steel, and dark with age. It was a book, which even to look at, would convince the beholder that within its heavy covers were written dark and terrible secrets. A book, the result of despotism, if opened, would carry misery to thousands, and one from which no good could come.

As noiselessly as he had entered, the automaton of the police office departed, and again the two men were left alone.

"If you do not already know the secret," said the count, as he seated himself before the ponderous volume, and began turning the leaves with a nervous haste, "we will learn it together."

It was with the greatest anxiety that De Vaudrey saw these preparations, the meaning of which he could not imagine.

Never for a moment did he think of any such records as the one he now saw, and he could only rack his brain in vain for some solution to his uncle's purpose. But he was soon enlightened.

"Here, here, in the archives of the police are entered the secrets of every noble family in France," said the count, seeking some particular page, "and here will I learn the secret of Diane de Vaudrey, Countess de Linieres."

For a time the chevalier was stunned by his uncle's words, and he looked on unable to move or speak.

"Why that would be shameful! it would be infamous!" he exclaimed at last, going towards the count as if to prevent his carrying his purpose into effect.

"Here it is," said De Linieres, eagerly, as he found the page he was seeking, and not giving heed to the chevalier's angry exclamation. "House of De Vaudrey, and each member has a page. Ah! Diane Eleanor, daughter of the Count Francois de Vaudrey."

The minister had read the heading of the page in an exultant tone. Now would he wrest the secret which his wife had so jealously kept from him, and he began to read.

"Monsieur you must not read!" cried Dr. Vaudrey, as he laid his hand upon the open page to prevent his uncle from seeing what was written.

The Count looked at the chevalier in surprise. Never had he known the young man to act in such utter disregard of his authority, and he asked in an angry tone:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," answered De Vaudrey, in a ringing voice, "that the act you are about to commit is unworthy

of you; unworthy of any gentleman. You must not, *shall* not."

A deep red flush surged over the Count's face, and portended an outburst of rage.

"Who will prevent it?" he asked in a voice hoarse with passion.

"Your own honor, which will revolt against such treason," said the young man, excitedly, and then seeing that his words had no effect upon the angry man before him, and forming a sudden resolve, he added: "And, sir, if your own honor does not speak loud enough, I will."

And in an instant he had grasped the page which bore the fatal secret, tearing it from the book with an angry wrench.

Mastered by his anger and astonishment, the count could only ask in a hesitating way:

"What have you done?"

"I warn you, sir," said De Vaudrey, as De Linieres came towards him, "that you can only wrest this paper from me with my life. You shall kill me before I part with it. Remember, sir, that it is not alone her secret I have saved you from violating, 'tis your own dignity and self-respect. I have saved your honor."

CHAPTER XIII.

SONS OF ONE FATHER.

To how many thousand homeless, shelterless beings in a great city does the very name of winter send a shudder over their attenuated frames, and cause them to think with fear and dread of the sufferings which must be theirs before nature shall dispense with it's fleecy mantle, and the sun cheer them with it's generous warmth.

Day after day do they crouch and shiver in the cold streets, begging for the pittance which is withheld for fear they may be imposters, while the wealthy man, who would not hesitate to spend thousands for his own pleasure, goes on his way congratulating himself that has not been imposed on, while the poor wretch who had hoped to receive a few pennies, draws his rags close around him and wonders how many hours will elapse ere gaunt starvation claims him as its victim.

Should that poor beggar, starving from the want of the few crumbs which fall unheeded from the rich man's table, ask himself, and not without reason, whether there *is* one who watches the sparrow's fall, the godly turns away with horror at the sentiment, and rejoice again that they did not give alms to one who refuses to believe, or questions the existence of a kind God.

Day after day do we read, and in a moment forget, of some one who was fashioned in God's own likeness lying dead from want.

> Dead—from the want of a crust!
> Dead—in the cold night air!
> Dead—and under the dust,
> Without ever a word of prayer;
> In the heart of the wealthiest city,
> In the most Christian land,
> Without ever a word of pity,
> Or the touch of a kindly hand.

Although our story necessitates our giving the history of the lives of some of these persons who beg rather than work, believe that such cases are the exception rather than the rule, and let not the history of the Frochards deter any one from a charitable deed.

Had the reader been in Paris on this winter day, and gone to the Church St. Sulpice, they would have seen the poor cripple Pierre gazing around in the hope of seeing Louise.

The day was bitterly cold, and the snow which has fallen all night is still covering the cold earth with its shroud.

Pierre, clothed in rags, limps painfully along, stopping every now and then to breathe upon his purple fingers, or swing his arms to infuse some warmth in his chilled body.

Offering a strong contrast to him is the well-dressed, well-fed Jacques, who meets him with a look of scorn.

"Have the women not come yet?" asked Jacques, in the tone of a man speaking to his inferior.

"No, not yet, mother and Mademoiselle Louise are busy elsewhere, no doubt," replied Pierre, while he gazed on his comfortably clad brother, and wondered why they, sons of one father, should be in such different circumstances.

"They ought to be here," said Jacques, the handsome, impatiently. "The service will soon be over, and they will miss the charitable idiots."

"They will be here in good time," said the cripple as if to excuse their absence. "You need not worry about them."

"It will be none too soon if they come now," was the angry exclamation, as the loving son went to seek some shelter from the storm, where he could wait until the coming of his mother, from whom he expected to get money enough to pay for his night's carousal at the nearest cabaret.

Pierre moved away as though expecting a blow (which was not uncommon) from his brother. He seemed to be trying to make up his mind to say something to his brother, and, judging from the length of time it took him, he did not expect a favorable answer to his prayer.

At last he went toward Jacques, and in a slow, hesitating way said:

"Jacques, I have a favor to ask of you."

"If it is money I haven't got any," answered the elder brother, moving away.

"No, no," answered Pierre quickly, "it is not money—but look here, Jacques, when you are angry with me, curse me, beat me if you want to, but do not call me cripple—not—not when Louise is present."

Jacques looked at his brother, as if doubting whether he had heard aright, and then as he saw the supplicating look upon the deformed boy's face he broke out into a coarse laugh.

"Indeed," he sneered. "We must speak to monsieur respectfully; take off our hats, I suppose. Why, we will dress you up in silk and velvet. You would like to wear gloves and carry a sword, I suppose."

The picture which his coarse taunts had called up was so comical, to his mind, that he was obliged to stop speaking and indulge in another hearty laugh.

An expression of pain passed over Pierre's face. He had hoped that his brother would grant him this simple favor, and his sneering words cut the poor fellow to the heart.

"Jacques," he said, in a tone of sadness and reproach.

"So it hurts your feelings to be called cripple, does it?" continued Jacques in a voice that hurt his brother more than his blows would. "Well, look at yourself, what are you?"

"I am a poor, deformed cripple," answered Pierre, as he brushed away the rising tear. "And to whom do I owe it? Who, when I was but an infant, beat me and broke and twisted my limbs because I refused to steal a coat for him?"

"You lie! it was a cloak," interrupted Jacques, fiercely.

"That is always your way," continued the cripple, "to make some one else steal for you. That was what forced poor Marianne——"

"Marianne!" exclaimed Jacques, as he raised his hand to strike the one who thus brought up the past. "Don't you dare to mention that ungrateful fool's name to me again. She was a heartless jade, who would rather go to prison than give me her money," and Jacques turned away with an expression of disgust at the idea of such ingratitude.

"She saved you from punishment," said Pierre, who

was ever ready to plead the cause of the unfortunate.

"That is enough," cried the ruffian, stamping his foot angrily. "I don't want to hear anything more about her. I have found another, who is better looking and more useful. As for you, as you don't want to be called cripple any more——"

And Jacques hesitated for a moment, as if he were searching his brain for some name, while Pierre, thinking that his brother had relented, and was about to answer his prayer, exclaimed anxiously:

"Well?"

"I'll re-christen you, Cupid."

Again a look of intense pain passed over Pierre's face as his brother's laugh rang out loud and shrill.

"Do as you like," he said, wearily, as if resigning himself to all the insults his brother might see fit to heap upon him.

"Now I come to think of it," said Jacques contemptuously, "it is only when Louise is about that you object to be called cripple; perhaps—" and as if he could no longer control himself, he burst out into his fiendish laugh again, at some thought which had entered his wicked brain. Then chuckling to himself he said, shaking his head in a mocking way: "Ah, that would be too good."

"What do you mean?" asked Pierre, not understanding the reason for his brother's mirth.

"You are not so stupid after all," laughed Jacques. "She is blind and does not know the difference between a handsome man like me, and a miserable abortion like you," and again his mirth resulted in laughter, while he exclaimed: "You're in love—in love with a blind girl."

"I?" said Pierre in surprise, as if hardly understanding what his brother had said, and at the same time looking down upon his mis-shapen form. "I? In love?"

"Why, then, are you ashamed of being called cripple before her? Afraid she'll find out your beautiful shape, eh?"

"Yes—yes, it is so," said the poor boy, as if the words came from him involuntarily. "I want to think there is one in the world who does not regard me with disgust. If she thought—I was like others, she might have some feeling of friendship for me. But in love—in love with, she who is beautiful enough, good enough to be an angel."

And there was upon Pierre's face, as he spoke of the blind girl, a light which is rarely seen, and then only when it is lit by a soul pure and noble.

Jacques looked upon his brother in surprise. He saw in that pale face something which he had never seen before, and could hardly repress his astonishment.

"How the devil did you find that all out? I don't know or care anything about her goodness," he said after a short pause. "Bosh, for all that—and as to her beauty, I know that her eyes are more use to her now, than if she could see with them."

"Yes, yes, she is blind," said Pierre sadly, "but her face is so sweet that it would move a stone to pity, and her great beautiful eyes seem to look at me so truthfully that I almost fear she can see me."

"There, there," said Jacques, who had not heard the latter part of the sentence, but who had started toward some drinking saloon where he would find more congenial companions; "stop your muttering, and come along with me. I want you, Cupid; come."

For once Pierre determined to resist his brother's tyranny.

"I will not go," he said, in a voice he vainly endeavored to make sound firm.

"Eh!" cried Jacques, in amazement. "What's this? rebellion, eh? now do as I order you, or look out for a beating," and the brute in human shape went towards the cripple with hand uplifted to strike.

Just at this moment the sad, sweet voice of a young girl was heard not far off, and Pierre started with delight. He recognized the tones of that, to him, angel song, and his purpose was changed immediately.

Like a voice from heaven did the notes, welling over with despair, speak to the deformed lad, filling his heart with peace and love.

"Jacques," he said, softly, "you are older than me, you're straight and strong, and I must submit to you; but when I see the use you make of your strength, I am satisfied with my ugly shape and miserable weakness."

And as he finished speaking, he turned in the direction from which the sound proceeded, and stood in anxious expectancy, awaiting the approach of the blind girl, who had so entirely changed the course of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE POWER OF THE LAW.

THE minister of police was so astounded by the sudden action on the part of his nephew, that he was for a few moments unable to speak.

His anger struggled for the mastery with his surprise, and as De Vaudrey saw the deep red flush mantling his uncle's face, he well knew what it portended. He held the leaf upon which was written the secret of the countess; but how long he might be permitted to retain it was still an open question.

De Vaudrey knew that the count would not hesitate to call upon the police, and order them to wrest the paper from him, and he deemed it the wisest course to leave the room while his uncle was yet stupefied, as it were, at his conduct.

With a low bow to the now thoroughly angry count, the chevalier left the room and proceeded directly to the apartments of the countess.

Meeting a servant as he went through the lofty halls he directed him to wait upon the Count de Linieres; for De Vaudrey had serious fears that upon one of his uncle's temperament, the passion which had control of him, might prove fatal.

His first movement as he entered the ante-chamber of his aunt's apartments, was to commit the paper he had torn from the book to the flames, and not until he had seen the last smouldering vestige of it reduced to ashes, did he seek the presence of the countess.

De Vaudrey treated the interview with the count, in his conversation with the countess, as nothing serious, and assured her, without relating any of the particulars, that her secret was safe.

Indeed, so moved was the countess, by the chevalier's argument in favor of the girl whom he loved, that, terrible as she believed would be the consequences if her secret was made known to her husband, she had hardly thought of what she had said, and consequently believed that the count's order for his nephew to return to him after escorting his aunt to her apartments, referred only to the question of the marriage which the king desired.

It was an exceedingly simple task for the chevalier now to induce the Countess de Linieres to call upon the young girl whom he loved, and after giving her Henriette's address, and receiving her assurance that she would visit the young girl on her return from church, the chevalier took his departure, leaving the countess to wander back in the dark and terrible mazes of the past, while he should seek Henriette's society, and be happy as he basked in the sun-light of the loved one's smiles.

The servant whom De Vaudrey had sent to the assistance of the count, found that gentleman in the greatest state of excitement consequent upon the behavior of his nephew.

"Send the chief clerk to me," said De Linieres to the servant.

When the clerk entered, he found his chief in a more quiet frame of mind; but from his manner of speaking

the evident suffering of the beautiful girl, he drew a coin from his pocket and put it into the girl's unwilling palm, and passed on his way.

Like a hawk pouncing upon a dove did Mother Frochard grasp the hand which held the money, and in an instant it was transferred to her capacious pocket.

"There, what did I tell you?" she said, triumphantly.

Then giving the poor girl a hard shake she said:

"Go on crying."

As she saw others approaching she raised her monotonous cry:

"Charity, good people, if you please."

Among the people who were coming toward the church was the good-natured doctor of the hospital of St. Louis and La Salpetriere, and to him did Mother Frochard direct her cries for charity.

"Please, my good sir," said the old woman, going towards him, and holding out her dirty hand.

Pierre and Jacques had moved away as soon as the church-goers came up, and now Mother Frochard, her charge, and the doctor were the only ones in the square.

The physician paid no attention to the old woman's entreaty, and was walking away; but La Frochard was not to be shaken off so easily. She stepped in front of him, and cried in a whining tone:

"Charity, if you please."

"Oh clear out!" exclaimed the doctor, whose patience was exhausted.

"Pity for a poor blind child, if you please, charity," persisted the old woman.

As the old woman spoke of the misfortune of Louise, the doctor's professional feelings, if not his charitable ones, were aroused, and he turned quickly around, asking:

"Blind! Who?" and seeing Louise for the first time, pointed to her as he asked:

"Is this young girl blind?"

"Alas! yes, my good sir, have pity on her," whined Mother Frochard in her professional voice, as she carefully kept Louise behind her.

"Poor unhappy child," said the good doctor sympathetically. "Let me look at your eyes," and as he spoke he went towards the poor orphan.

It was charity that La Frochard wanted, and not sympathy or professional services, therefore she did not wish the doctor to see the poor girl, for fear that she might be taken to the hospital, and hereby deprive the worthy Frochards of the amount she could earn by begging.

The old woman sprang towards Louise, and roughly pushed her away, at the same time confronting the physician with the question.

"Why do you want to see her?" she uttered in an angry tone.

"Come here, my child," continued the doctor, not heeding the old woman's interference or question. "Let me see your eyes. I am a doctor."

"A doctor!" exclaimed Louise joyfully, as she started to go towards the kind man who had thus interested himself in her fate.

But Mother Frochard caught the poor girl by the arm, and with a vicious thump with her elbow at Louise's side, and a cruel pinch of her arm, prevented her from speaking.

"Come along," she said in a low voice of rage, so low as not to be heard by the doctor, and then in a shrill voice which she tried to make sound resigned, she said to the physician. "They can't be cured; it is no use," and clutching Louise more firmly by the arm, and almost shaking her in her wrath she said: "Come along, my dear."

"But I insist," said the doctor firmly. "You are impostors, and I will hand you over to the police."

The old hag's eyes glared fiercely for a moment; but she saw that it was useless for her to resist, for should Louise once get under the protection of the police, she would never go back to the old boathouse on the banks of the Seine.

"Well then," she said, as she rudely pushed Louise towards him, "see for yourself if she is not blind," and then unable to restrain her anger, she muttered to herself: "Curse him, I know him; he is that whining doctor at the hospital."

And as soon as she had thus given vent to some of her anger, she stood by the side of Louise to prevent her telling the doctor anything that might reflect on her tormentor's motherly care.

"Ah! sir, if you are a doctor," began Louise eagerly: but before she had concluded the sentence, Mother Frochard gave her such a cruel pinch on the arm that she did not dare to say anything more.

"Well do you see?" asked the old woman shrilly, after the doctor had examined the poor girl's eyes for a moment. "She's blind, ain't she?"

"You have not always been blind, my child, have you?" asked the doctor, not heeding the old woman's question.

"No, monsieur," said Louise timidly, as she involuntarily shrank from the blow, or pinch which she expected to receive. "I was fourteen years old when this misfortune befell me."

"Fourteen?" exclaimed the doctor in astonishment, "and you have had no treatment?"

"Monsieur—" began Louise eagerly, forgetting for the moment the old witch that stood beside her.

Mother Frochard saw in a moment that Louise was about to speak of her past life, and she adroitly administered a blow in the poor girl's side, unperceived by the doctor, that prevented her from speaking, and before the interruption could be noticed, she said quickly:

"We are so poor, good doctor, we have not the money to——"

"Oh, monsieur," interrupted Louise, who would not thus be deprived of one chance to regain her sight, and who resolved to speak, regardless of what the old woman might say or do. "For mercy's sake, if you have any pity, speak to me, tell me is there any hope for me; oh, if you knew from what misery your words might save me."

Again did the old woman give the poor orphan a cruel blow, and hastened to speak lest Louise should try to say more.

"Yes, yes indeed," she said in her whining voice, as she tried to push Louise away, "there can't be any worse misery than to be blind. If she could see, she could work, and would not have to beg. Isn't that so, my dear?" and again the cruel hand reminded Louise how she must speak.

"Yes, yes," said the poor girl eagerly. "I would work—I would—I—I would."

She was about to say that she would then find her sister; but Mother Frochard, ever on the alert, understood what the poor orphan would say, and a wicked grasp of the arm caused her to change her words.

"Calm yourself, my child, calm yourself," said the good doctor, deeply moved by the suffering which was evident from the young girl's words. Then beckoning to the old woman he moved a few steps away from Louise, and said:

"Come here."

The old woman pushed Louise some distance from her, so that she could not, by any means, hear what was said, and then in a servile voice asked, as she went towards the physician:

"What is it, doctor?"

"Listen," said the medical man, in a low tone. "You must not excite her, and you must not tell her suddenly what I hope; but bring her to me at the hospital St. Louis."

"Yes, yes," said the old woman quickly; but at the same time with an ugly scowl upon her hard face. "I know, I have been there often."

"I thought I recognized you," said the doctor, regarding her thoughtfully. "Let me see, you are called Mother——"

"Widow Frochard, monsieur," said the old woman, drawing herself up indignantly.

"Yes, I remember," said the doctor, with a smile upon his face at the old hag's assumption of dignity. "Well, when she is calmer, you can tell her gently that I think there is hope for her, and then, when she is more accustomed to the idea, bring her to me."

"Yes, yes, I will," replied the old wretch, with a wicked smile upon her face. "I'll tell her gently. Trust me, doctor, for that. You can depend on me."

Had the good man known how gently the old woman would have told the poor girl of the good news, he would not have left her as he did; but he believed Louise to be Frochard's daughter, and like many others, was deceived by the old hag's whining voice.

"Here, my poor child," said the doctor, going towards Louise, and giving her some money, while to the poor girl the words which followed was of more value than all the money he could have given her. "Courage," he added in a pleasant voice, "courage, my dear, I will see you again."

These words carried hope with them to the afflicted girl's heart, and in the excess of her joy she was unable to speak, but stood trembling with excitement.

As the doctor walked away mother Frochard called after him in her shrill, cracked voice:

"May Heaven bless you, good doctor. Heaven bless you."

And as the physician turned the corner, and was out of hearing, her blessings turned to curses, and in a voice full of hate and anger, she exclaimed:

"Curses on you for a meddling old fool."

"What did he tell you, madam?" asked Louise, eagerly, as she went towards the old woman, expecting to hear the words of encouragement which the doctor's kind words assured her she would hear.

"He said it was not worth the trouble," said the old hag, in a hard voice. "There is no hope for you."

These cruel words struck Louise with harder force than a blow would have done, and she staggered against one of the buildings for support.

"Alas, alas! what can I do?" she wailed, and there was a depth of despair in her cry, such as seldom comes from human lips. "What will become of me?"

The encounter with the doctor was in the highest degree dangerous to the old woman's plans, and she resolved that it should not occur again.

"If I bring her here every day, he will see her again," she said to herself. "No, no; that will not do."

For a few moments she remained in deep thought, and then a smile of triumph came over her face which was fiendish, and she said to Louise:

"Look here, child, I am a good woman. You have been complaining that I always take you to the same places. Now, to-morrow we will look for your sister in some other part of the city."

"Ah, madam," said Louise, gratefully, "I thank you. I have now but one hope left, to find my dear sister, my dear Henriette."

Now that all hope of ever recovering her sight, which had been so suddenly raised, and so rudely dashed, was taken from her, her soul cried out more anxiously than ever, if such a thing could be possible, for the sister who had been so cruelly taken from her.

CHAPTER XVI.

SYMPATHY AND LOVE.

PIERRE and Jacques returned as soon as the doctor had gone away, and Jacques, who had waited long for some money, said:

"Well, mother, how is business?"

This question reminded the old woman of the money the doctor had given Louise, and she said quickly, as she opened the poor girl's hand with no gentle force.

"Yes, yes, what did the doctor give you?"

"That, madam," replied Louise, as the old hag took the money.

This was Jacques's opportunity, and he was not a man to let such a chance miss him.

Before his mother could tell of what amount the coin was, he had taken it from her, and after examining it, exclaimed:

"Gold! What thieves these doctors must be, it's a gold piece," and he coolly put it into his pocket, and was about to go away when his mother cried out:

"But that is mine."

"Eh? never mind, mother," he said as he put his arm around his mother's neck, and forced her to go with him. "I'll treat you to some brandy."

"With my own money, brigand," said the old woman, completely mollified by her son's small show of affection, and perfectly willing to accompany her villain of a son on his orgy.

But a thought of business came over her just as she was leaving, and she turned long enough to say in her shrill, angry voice to Louise:

"Look you, they will be coming out of the church soon; now sing out loud. No lazyness, mind what I say, for I'll be watching you."

"Yes, madam," replied Louise meekly.

"Pierre! Where is that lazy scamp?" cried the old woman, who had not seen the poor cripple who stood in the angle of one of the buildings, until her voice caused him to come forward. "Here, put her on the church steps."

"Yes, mother," said Pierre, going towards the blind girl, thankful of an opportunity even of touching the innocent girl's hand.

But Jacques was opposed to his doing even that, for as Pierre was about to take hold of Louise's wasted hand, he pushed him rudely aside, and in a rough voice said:

"Never mind, Cupid, you need not trouble yourself. I'll take care of her."

Louise shrank from his touch; but he never let such trifles as that deter him, in fact he preferred that even the sound of his voice should give pain, and taking her rudely by the hand, he led her to the steps of the church, and stood for a moment looking at her.

"Yes, yes," he said half to himself, "she is devilish good-looking, considering she's blind."

"You stay here, and see that no one speaks to her," said the old woman to Pierre.

"I will watch her," replied the cripple, with a look of devotion to the poor girl such as one might give to the picture of the Madonna.

"There's no danger that he'll let any one run away with her; is there, Cupid," laughed Jacques, as he started off with his mother.

For some time after mother and son had gone awa Pierre stood gazing at the wasted form of the poor blind girl, while the great tears of sympathy and love filled his eyes, and trickled down his distorted face.

Seated upon the cold stone steps which were covered with snow and ice, and with scanty clothing to shield her from the piercing wind and falling snow, the poor girl shook with the cold like one in an ague fit.

It was a sight which cut the honest, tender Pierre to the heart, but yet he had nothing with which to cover her, save the ragged coat which he wore, and the loss of that would leave his body almost naked.

Only for a moment did he hesitate, and then drawing off the only garment in which there was any warmth, he went towards Louise.

"I am so very cold," shivered the poor girl, as she tried to wrap the miserable sack she wore, more closely around her.

Pierre covered her with the coat, and stood exposed to all the merciless fury of the storm, thankful that he was able to do her this service.

"Is that you, Pierre," asked the young girl, as she felt Pierre covering her with the garment.

"Yes, mamzelle," replied the cripple, breathing upon

his fingers which were rapidly becoming purple from the intense cold.

"Yes, it must be you, Pierre; you are the only one who is kind to me. But this is your coat," she said as she felt the garment. "What will you do without it, Pierre?"

"Oh, I'll do very well indeed, mamzelle," replied Pierre, vainly trying to keep his teeth from chattering, and at the same time telling a falsehood in order to induce the young girl to keep the coat. "I have a jacket, and my woolen waistcoat, and my—oh, that is only my overcoat. Besides, I am very warm, very warm, indeed!"

Even while the honest fellow was speaking, he was obliged to move around to keep the blood in circulation he was so rapidly becoming chilled.

"Pierre," said Louise earnestly, "without you I should die, without your help I shouldn't have strength to endure my sufferings."

Again the tears came into the cripple's eyes; but this time they were tears of joy as well as sorrow.

He was happy at the words which Louise uttered, for they showed him that she thought of him, depended upon him, and his heart, which was so hungry for the love of some one, rejoined.

"I know they make you wretched," he said sadly. "My heart bleeds at the sufferings they inflict on you; but I am helpless, helpless, I can do nothing, nothing."

These despairing words which the thought of his own weakness wrung from Pierre's heart, touched Louise deeply, and she tried to comfort him.

"Is your sympathy, your compassion, nothing?" she asked in a tender voice, and as she took hold of the coat he had placed upon her shoulders, she added: "Even now I have to thank you. Yes, your pity, your kindness sustains me."

As she said this, she arose and took Pierre's hand in her own.

In doing so, she touched his arm which was partly covered by the thin ragged shirt, and in an instant she understood what he had done.

"Oh, how selfish I am!" as she took the coat from off her shoulders.

"No, no!" cried Pierre, trying to prevent her from doing so, and refusing to take it back."

"Pierre, do take it," she almost begged him, "my dear Pierre, for my sake take it."

Pierre could not resist this entreaty, and very reluctantly did he again put the coat on.

"I am not cold now," she said, struggling not to betray the intense suffering which was hers, as the chilling snow again fell upon her almost unprotected shoulders, "and if I were, am I not accustomed to suffering? did they not leave me in the cold garret to starve, because I refused to beg? But, alas! I must beg, or die and lose all my hope of seeing my dear sister Henriette once more."

The wail of sorrow which accompanied the words so moved Pierre, that for a moment he was unable to speak.

"Have you never thought of escaping?" he said at last. "I can assist you. Let me inform the police, and they will protect you."

"No, no," replied Louise, quickly, "you must not. I have thought it, but that would deprive me of the only chance of finding my sister. They would shut me up in an asylum for the blind, and then I should be lost to her forever. Besides, I have an idea which sustains me and is my last hope. If they take me from one quarter of the city to the other, perhaps some day my voice may reach my sister's ears."

I will sing the same songs we learned together, and when I finish I will cry out 'Henriette! 'tis I your sister Louise! Do you not hear me, Henriette, sister?"

As the poor girl thus repeated the cry which she hoped would lead her to her dear sister, her voice unconsciously rose to a louder pitch, until the last words were uttered with all her strength, and she seemed to think that even there might she be heard by the loved one.

At the same time the organ from the church swelled out a hymn of praise to God, that seemed almost like mockery; for here, at the very steps of God's temple, was there not one of His children in deepest despair, which had been caused by man, and suffering an affliction which God had visited upon her, perhaps for the sins of her fathers.

But the ways of God are past finding out, and in his own good time will he pour his balm upon the stricken one's heart, and in the fullness of his love remove all sorrow and care from her pure and spotless life.

Pierre feared lest his mother should hear Louise's cry, and he knew by the sound of the organ that the service was concluded, therefore he said, soothingly:

"Hush! Louise, they will hear you. The service is over, and mother will be coming back to watch you."

"And if she does not hear me singing she will beat me."

And the poor creature commenced to sing in a feeble voice, just as the richly dressed people began to pour out of the church, brushing, without thought, the poor blind girl with their elegant robes.

The feeble, but sweet voice attracted none of the worshipers; they were so much occupied with the thoughts of God which the good priest had instilled into their minds that they could not see one of His children who was singing her life away.

Among the last who came from the house of God was the Countess de Linieres, and upon her face was still the same look of sadness which seemed habitual to it.

I have prayed to heaven to restore to me my child," she said, half to herself. "Will my prayer never be answered."

The sad song which Louise was singing arrested her attention, and stirred strange emotions in her breast.

"What a voice! How tender and how sad. It awakens pity akin to pain. Gracious Heaven! What is the meaning of that fixed look?" and bending over the poor beggar, she asked. "My child can you not see me?"

"No madam," was Louise's low, sad answer.

"Poor child!" exclaimed the countess.

"Do you pity me, madam?" and Louise asked the question almost wonderingly, little dreaming how much right she had to claim pity and love from the aristocratic lady who was bending over her.

As the blind girl spoke she felt a hard grip upon her arm, and she knew that Mother Frochard was listening to whatever she might say.

The Countess de Linieres saw the hard-featured old hag, and she could not but wonder at the marked contrast between the two.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHARITY AND PITY.

THE blind girl's question, "do you pity me, madam?" aroused all the the great flood of sympathy that the countess was so well known to have; and it was with evident emotion that she answered:

"Pity you? indeed I do, my child."

These words fell with a sweet sound upon the poor girl's eager ears, and she stepped nearer the kind lady, regardless of the proximity of the old hag, who was doing all she could to make the pure, young life wretched.

"You pity me because I am blind," she said, in a touching voice. "Alas, madam, *that* is not my greatest misfortune."

"What do you mean?" asked the kind-hearted lady, in surprise. "Speak, child; I am rich, perhaps I can——

"Ah! if I dare!" exclaimed Louise, bracing herself to tell her story to this lady who spoke to her in such pitying accents, and who could do so much toward aiding her to find her sister.

But Mother Frochard, who had heard Louise's last words, had no intention of allowing the conversation to proceed any further, and she grasped the blind girl's tender arm between her hard and wicked fingers, inflicting a hurt which caused the poor girl to cry out with pain.

"Eh, eh? what is it?" asked the old hag, as she pressed her fat, dirty face close to the aristocratic features of the countess, while her small, gray eyes watched the lady's face as if to find out what Louise had already told.

"You have a relative—a mother?" asked the countess of Louise, utterly ignoring La Frochard's impertinent interruption.

"Mother!" exclaimed the blind girl, in tones of deepest despair.

In that one word all wretchedness of her hard lot was embodied, and her very soul seemed to go out with the word.

Louise had spoken before her tormentor could prevent her; but the old woman revenged herself by another wicked pinch, and at the same time speaking quickly, as if to prevent the lady from noticing the blind girl's tone.

"Yes, my beautiful lady," she said in her shrill, coarse tones, while she screwed her face up into what she intended as a most humble smile, "she has a good mother, if I do say so."

"Is this your daughter?" asked the countess, in great surprise, as she gazed at the two now side by side, and compared the slight, shrinking, beautiful girl with the fawning, fat and coarse old woman who thus claimed to be the mother of one who resembled her as little as do the angels resemble those imps of satan that torment lost souls.

"The youngest of seven that Heaven has blessed me with, my lady," replied the old woman, as she dropped a stiff courtesy, and tried to put on a resigned and contented look. "That is what the darling was going to tell you—isn't it deary?"

A fierce, sly blow in the back warned the trembling Louise what her fate would be if she did not answer as the old hag told her to; but in spite of the old woman's threats the poor girl could not thus tell a falsehood, and in addition destroy the faint hopes of seeing her sister that the countess's kind words had caused to spring up in her bosom.

"I—I—" she stammered in her attempt to reply; but another vicious blow from La Frochard caused her to reel and almost lose her breath.

As if she was afflicted with an excess of motherly love, the old woman went towards the trembling girl, and under pretense of supporting, took her by the arm in a manner that caused Louise the most intense pain, and at the same time, almost prevented her from speaking.

Then, with her false smile, and affectation of tenderness, she asked—or, it would be more proper to say, answered for Louise,

"Certainly. Isn't it so, my dear?"

"She seems to be ill and suffering," said the countess, as she saw how badly the poor girl trembled, and, attributing it to physical weakness, rather than emotion, feared that she was sick and concluded that that was the reason why Louise had not answered her questions.

"Ah! good, charitable souls, like you, my lady, have pity on her," replied the old woman, in her whining voice, that grated on Louise's ears, and even caused her to shrink away, as if with pain. "She has a nice, good home. Haven't you, my dear?"

As the old hag asked this question of Louise, she clutched her more firmly by the arm, and in a low, hoarse voice, whispered:

"Speak out!"

"Yes—yes—" faltered Louise.

Fearful lest the countess should begin to have some suspicion of the real state of affairs, La Frochard stepped in front of Louise, and thus prevented her from saying anything further.

"Give this to your mother, and pray for me," said the countess, as she handed the poor girl a gold-piece, and entered her sedan chair, and in a few moments was out of sight.

Until the chair in which the countess was seated, was out of sight, Mother Frochard watched it narrowly, and stood in a motherly sort of attitude near Louise; but as soon as the last one of the servants wearing the De Linieres livery, had turned the corner, she grasped the money eagerly and with no gentle force.

"Ah! a louis, another gold-piece! It has been a good day, after all."

And carefully placing the money in her capacious pocket, the old woman looked anxiously around to see which one of the many streets that met at the square offered the best facilities for her business.

At length she decided upon her route, and going up to Louise, she seized her roughly by the hand, then gave her arm a pinch, by way of reminder, and said in her hard, stern voice:

"Come on now, and sing out. Sing, I tell you."

Thus commanded, the poor girl began in a low voice that trembled with its suppressed emotion, and the two walked slowly away, while the old hag continued her shrill, monotonous cry of:

"Charity, good people; charity for a poor blind girl."

Jacques and Pierre had been silent witnesses of the scene between the countess and Louise, and nothing but the number of people that were passing prevented Jacques from adding the louis given by the countess to some liquor dealer's hoard.

When La Frochard and Louise went on their way, Pierre started to follow them, in order that he might have the satisfaction of gazing upon the slight form of the blind girl, if only from the distance, but he was stopped by Jacques's brutal voice.

"Stop!" he cried in an angry tone, "I have a word to say to you."

For an instant the cripple did not heed the voice; but the thought of what his brother might do, caused him to stop, turn half around and ask:

"What is it?"

"I forbid you to follow Louise!" exclaimed Jacques in an angry voice.

"What? You forbid?" asked Pierre as if he doubted that he had heard aright.

"Yes, and I forbid you to even think of her."

This time Jacques voice was hoarse with rage, and he looked as if he was about to spring upon his deformed brother, and kill him then and there because he even dared to cast his eyes in the direction the blind girl had taken.

It was evident that this brute of a man, who knew no other pleasure than drinking or making others suffer, had, in his own brutal way, fallen in love with the poor girl whom he delighted to torment.

"Jacques, I cannot help it," said Pierre in an almost imploring tone. "You would not be so cruel. No, no Jacques. Why are you so cruel?"

"Never mind why, I forbid you, that is enough, and if you dare to disobey me, I'll break those misshapen legs over again, Cupid."

As he said this he dealt the poor cripple a cruel blow which knocked him down, as a mild way of enforcing his commands.

"Ah! kill me, kill me if you will," said Pierre as he slowly arose from the ground, and in a lower voice he added: "But I love her, and you cannot forbid that."

Jacques cast a look of scorn and contempt at the cripple, who stood shivering like one in an ague fit, and then lighting his inseparable companion—a short clay pipe—moved away in the direction of the nearest cabaret.

For a few moments the poor boy, who had been deformed by the brother who should have protected instead of beating him, stood in a dejected attitude. He knew full well why Jacques had forbidden him

even to think of Louise, and he shuddered as he thought of the additional cruelty which the poor girl would have to suffer, because of the love which Jacques—cruel, hard-hearted Jacques—had conceived for her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN HONEST LOVE.

We will return to Henriette who, like her sister, was living in the hope of meeting the one who had been so cruelly torn from her by the rude hands of unscrupulous men.

She is seated in a poorly furnished attic room, engaged at sewing, while her thoughts wander back to the fatal night when, strangers in the great city, the two unprotected girls were doomed by a hard, unyielding fate to wander apart, seeking, but never finding the other.

While she was thus engaged, a low knock was heard at the door, and the Chevalier de Vandrey entered.

A careless observer would have seen that he was a lover, and that the object of his adoration was before him

"Henriette," he said, tenderly taking her hands and pressing them to his lips, "have you heard anything? You seem agitated."

"I was expecting you, I mean I thought perhaps you would bring me knews of Louise," replied the fair girl in pretty confusion.

"No, I have heard nothing," replied the chevalier, regretfully. "Yet you know I have occupied myself unceasingly for the past three months in vain endeavors to ascertain her fate. But to-day, Henriette, I wished to speak to you of something else—of myself."

"I know, monsieur, all that you would say to me," replied Henriette, in a low, sweet voice. "I know that you rescued me at the risk of your own life, from a frightful peril, and believe me, I am not ungrateful."

"Henriette do you feel no other sentiment than gratitude? Do you not understand my heart? Until yesterday, I was bound in honor to impose silence on my life, circumstances has released me, and to-day I can, and dare avow with pride that I love you."

The young man paused for a moment as if expecting the young girl to speak; but, as she kept silent, he continued in a deep, manly voice:

"Henriette, mine is not a trifling, frivolous love. I loved you from the moment when I first saw you courageously defending your honor with prayers, with threats, and with tears. I loved you from the moment your innocence appealed to my manhood, and I swear to you before Heaven, that this love, born in an instant, shall end only with my life."

"Oh, this is wrong, wrong," said Henriette, as the great tears of gratitude came welling up in her eyes. "I have known too long all that your heart was striving to hide from me, and I have been guilty to allow it to distract me from the only duty I have in life. You should not compel me to confess my weakness."

"Henriette!" exclaimed the chevalier, reproachfully.

"Leave me to my sacred task, and when Louise is restored to my arms, I shall have earned the right to be happy."

"Henriette, dear Henriette——" began De Vandrey; but he was interrupted by a knock at the door and an instant after the round, smiling, inquisitive face of Picard was seen at the half-opened door.

"Picard!" exclaimed the chevalier, in surprise at seeing his valet.

"Yes, monsieur, it is Picard, only Picard," said the valet, as he entered the room.

"What do you want? What brings you here?" and De Vandrey's voice, usually so soft, was now harsh and angry.

"The fellow is my valet," he added, in a low tone to Henriette.

"Yes, mamzelle," said the valet with an equivocal bow. "I am Picard the discreet," and he thought to himself, "This must be the chambermaid, and he is in her room. Oh, he is doing well."

"What brings you here?" asked the chevalier, impatiently.

"A communication for you, sir, of the greatest importance," answered Picard, with an important air.

"I must take my work down stairs, they are waiting for it," said Henriette, thinking that the valet had something of a private nature to say to his master.

"You will return?" asked De Vandrey, very anxiously.

"Oh yes, in a few minutes."

"She will return," said Picard to himself, "well that is good. Mistress below stairs and a pretty chambermaid up here. This is the young man who was studying philosophy," and a self-satisfied smile passed over his face as he thought that his master was walking in the way he admired.

"Well, sir," said De Vaudrey, as soon as the door closed and they were alone, "we are alone now, what brings you here?"

"I took the liberty of following you, monsieur," replied Picard in a saucy voice.

"Following me, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the chevalier in an angry tone.

"Scoundrel is good, very good," said Picard in a low voice. "Now he is something like a master."

"What do you say?"

"I was saying, monsieur, that scoundrel is not half strong enough, particularly when I come to find out that after all——"

"After all! What?"

And De Vandrey was fast losing his temper, a state in which the valet seemed most anxious to see him.

"Good, he will kick me in a minute," thought Picard, as he said in an impudent sort of way:

"You must know, monsieur, that I had become so disgusted with your good conduct that I begged your uncle to relieve me of the duty of serving you any longer, and if he had not insisted on my remaining and watching you——"

"So you have become a spy, Master Picard, have you?" interrupted De Vandrey in an angry voice.

"Yes sir, a spy on you. Why, monsieur, if I had not, how should I have found out that you were a gallant and a *roue!*"

"*Roue!*" exclaimed the chevalier, who was now regaining his temper, and becoming amused. "Well, how did you find that out?"

"By obeying the instructions of your uncle. I follow you to the house of your inamorata, and instead of finding you with that much honored lady, I discover you enjoying the society of her chambermaid."

"Chambermaid!" exclaimed De Vaudrey, not understanding at first what his valet meant.

"Oh, you have the fairest of excuses," said Picard in a light tone. "She is as pretty as——"

"Look you, Master Picard," cried the chevalier, now thoroughly enraged, "another word and I will throw you out of that window."

"Oh, that is going further than I bargained for," said Picard, getting a little alarmed. "Thrown out of a sixth story window."

"Listen to me, sir," said De Vandrey sternly.

"I am all ears, monsieur; but please remember that we are very high up," and Picard made a grimace that was inexpressibly comical.

"Return at once to the count, and tell him that after having dogged my footsteps day by day, you have at last found me in the presence of the woman I love."

"You mean of the chambermaid of the woman you love. Same thing," said Picard, flippantly.

"Silence, sir! I tell you that you have seen the woman I love, and you may inform the count that she is to be my wife," and De Vandrey's voice rang out loud and clear, while a proud light in his eyes shew

how much of an honor he felt it would be for him if the woman of his choice should consent to marry him.

"Eh, your wife?" exclaimed Picard in surprise.

"Silence, sir, she is coming."

As he spoke the door opened and Henriette entered the room. Her beautiful eyes were filled with tears, and her face was expressive of the deepest misery.

With that abandon which grief imparts, she threw herself into a chair, and laying her head on the table sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Shame! shame! I am sure I do not deserve to be so insulted," she sobbed half to herself.

"What is it, Henriette? Who has insulted you?" asked De Vaudrey, while the fire that flashed from his eyes boded no good for the insulter.

"I am ordered to leave the house," replied Henriette, still sobbing.

"Ordered to leave the house! Why?" and the chevalier seemed to be in a perfect whirl of amazement.

"Alas, monsieur, they tell me that a young girl living alone, has not the right to receive the visits of gentlemen such as you."

"Such as I? I who have always treated you with the respect due a sister!"

"A moment ago she was his wife," said Picard, who had been eagerly listening to the dialogue, to himself, "now she is his sister. Oh, it's all right."

"The mistress of the house, who until now has been so kind to me, says she cannot permit me to remain, for she has a good name to protect, which my conduct scandalizes," continued Henriette, in a low, sad voice: "What could I say? She has ordered me to leave at once."

"Poor thing!" said Picard, in a sympathizing voice. "Monsieur, I say this is unjust, this is—it——"

"Shameful!" exclaimed De Vaudrey, whose indignation at first prevented him from speaking.

"Certainly it is shameful," said Picard, earnestly. "Mamzelle, I will go to that woman myself. I'll tell her you are not yet—that is, I mean that you—that he—that I—I don't know what I do mean," and the valet, who, despite his love for adventure, was really a good hearted, honest fellow, turned away to hide the tears which sprang to his eyes.

"Henriette," said the chevalier tenderly, "dry your tears. You shall leave this house to enter mine."

"That is pretty cool!" exclaimed the valet in surprise; but in so low a tone that his master did not hear him.

"Not mine alone," continued De Vaudrey, "but yours as well, for you shall enter it on the arm of your husband."

"Your wife!" exclaimed the weeping girl. "No, no, that is impossible."

"I agree with you, perfectly," thought Picard, whose ideas as regards birth and position were very decided.

"Think of the immeasurable distance which separates us," continued Henriette in a firm voice. "Believe that I appreciate the generosity which inspires you, yet my duty impells me to refuse."

"Refuse!" repeated the chevalier in surprise.

"Spoken like a sensible girl," was Picard's mental comment upon Henriette's decision.

"How could I defy the will of your family?" said the poor girl, speaking half to herself. "They are rich and powerful. A marriage with me would entail their enmity, even their persecution."

"If my family will not give their consent, I will find means to compel them," was De Vaudrey's angry exclamation.

"Certainly, we'll compel them," said Picard, suddenly espousing the young girl's cause.

"Picard, my hat," said the chevalier, in an imperious tone. "We must go."

"Yes, monsieur, we must go," was Picard's comment, as he handed his master his hat, and then he said half to himself: "I shall want to marry her myself in a few minutes."

"Henriette, I go to find the means of assuring our happiness," said De Vaudrey, going toward the door.

"Farewell, monsieur, farewell," exclaimed the poor girl, again bursting into tears.

"No, Henrietta, I will not say farewell, I cannot part with all my hopes. I need them to give me courage. Au-revoir."

"Au-revoir," exclaimed Henriette, as the door closed behind the man she loved.

Picard had waited in order to say some comforting word to the poor girl, and as soon as his master had left the room, he said, in what he intended to be a polite tone; but which failed most signally, owing to his emotion:

"Mamzelle, I admire you. I esteem you. I—I—au-revoir," and he rushed out of the door to hide his confusion.

Left alone, Henriette gave herself up to deep reflection.

Should she throw her love aside for duty? was the question she asked herself many times, and hard indeed was the struggle in the poor girl's heart.

On one side she saw wealth and happiness, and on the other misery and privation; but the duty she owed her sister at last decided her.

"No, I will not see him again. I have not the strength to continue this conflict between love and duty," she said, in an audible voice. "He loves me! Oh, is it not a beautiful dream? Ah! it is but a dream, and the awakening has come to remind me of my guilty neglect. I am justly punished, insulted, driven from this house. I must go—go where I shall never see him again."

And as she concluded, thus deciding between her love and duty, she bowed her fair head, and wept hot, bitter tears of sorrow, and blighted love.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOUND AND LOST.

HENRIETTE remained in her grief-stricken position for some time; but she was suddenly aroused from it by a knock at the door, and the entrance of a lady richly dressed, and bearing evident marks of one in the first circles of society.

It was the Countess de Linieres.

"This is Mademoiselle Henriette Girard, I believe?" she asked, in a kind tone.

"That is my name, madam," replied Henriette, in great astonishment.

"You have been warmly recommended to me, made moiselle."

"Recommended to you, madam?"

"I am one of a society of charitable persons who, if the good report I have heard of you is true, can assist you," said the countess, thus hiding the real purport of her visit.

"I am not in need, madam—alas! I do not mean that. I mean that I am not in want—I can work."

"Can I do nothing for you?"

"Nothing," replied Henrietta, and then as if suddenly recollecting herself she added imploringly: "What do I say? Yes, madam, I accept your aid, nay, I implore it."

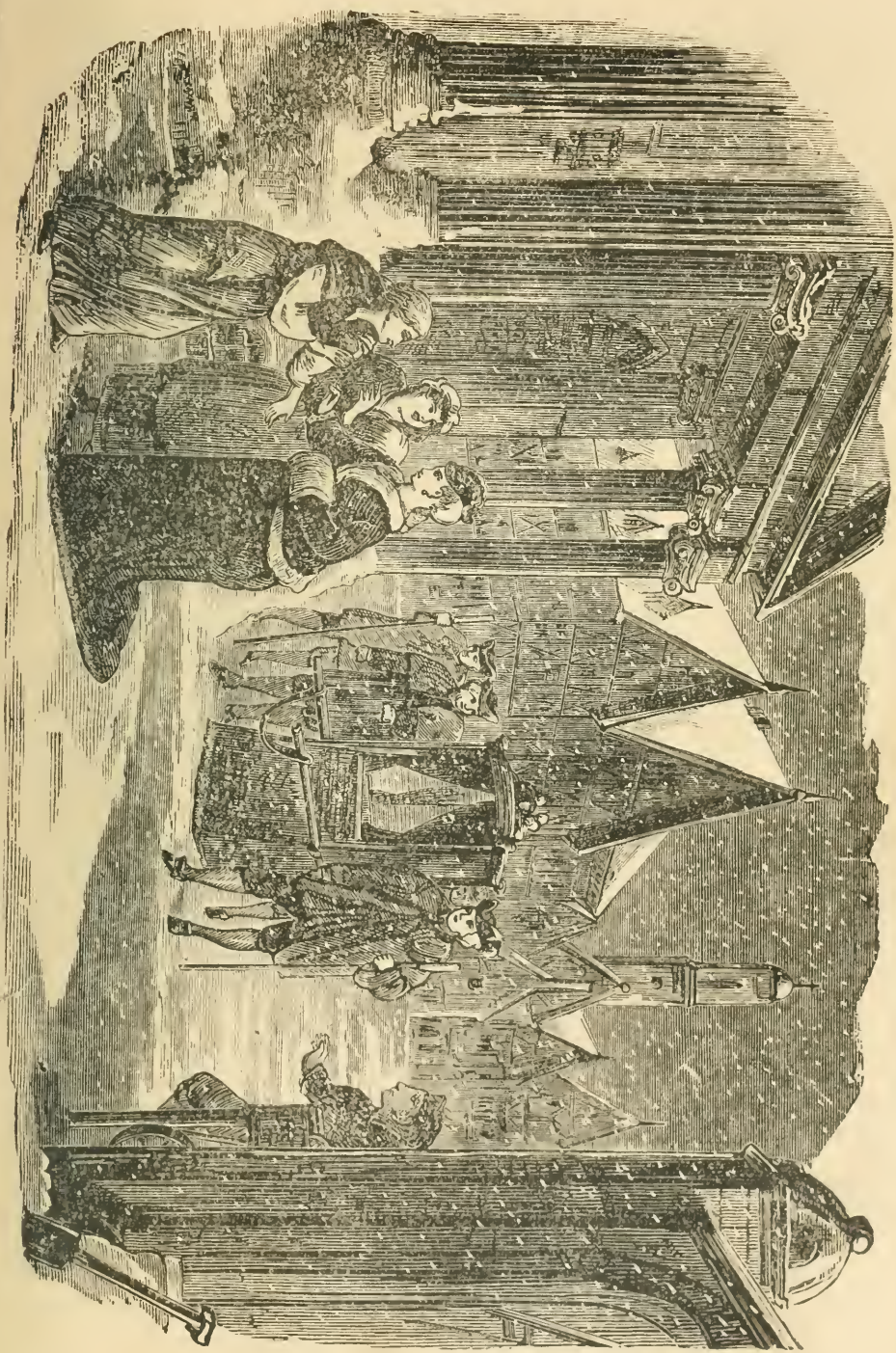
"What is it you wish?" asked the countess in a kind tone.

"Madam," said Henriette earnestly. "I do not need money, I ask for some shelter where I can live and work, far from falsehood and calumny, and away from him."

"From him? Do you wish to escape from the persecution of some one?"

"From one who wishes to make me his wife," replied Henriette sadly.

"His wife?" repeated the countess, with a view of causing the young girl to say more.



"Do you pity me?" said blind Louise, little dreaming of the right she had to claim pity of the lady who addressed her.

"I have refused that title, and yet I distrust my courage to resist his entreaties."

"You have done well, madamoiselle, and it is my duty to speak frankly to you. I am a near relative of the Chevalier's. I have known for some time of the attachment which exists between you, and I have defended him against the wrath of his uncle, my husband. But reflection has shown me my duty to both of you. The opposition of his family renders this marriage impossible."

"Madam," replied Henriette with a tinge of pride in her voice. "I had determined on my course before seeing you. The path of sacrifice and duty."

"I shall not prove ungrateful," replied the countess, touched by the young girl's words. "I am rich and powerful."

"Powerful!" exclaimed Henriette, thinking perhaps she might interest her in Louise's fate.

"If at any time I can show my appreciation of your noble and disinterested conduct——"

"Madam, you can!" exclaimed the young girl eagerly, not noticing that she was interrupting the countess, so eager was she. "Now at this very instant you can."

"How?"

"Use your power to find the poor child who has been torn from my protection. Restore her to me, and you can ask no sacrifice I will not make. I will tear my love from my heart, and disappear with her where you and yours shall never see me more. Do I ask too much?"

"No, no," answered the countess quickly. "I promise you not alone my aid; but that of the greatest power in Paris. Give me her name, age, and description."

"A description, alas! madam, too easily given. She is but sixteen and blind."

"Blind, blind," repeated the countess, while her thoughts went back to the blind girl she had met a short time previous.

"Her name is Louise."

"Louise!" exclaimed the lady, "that name is very dear to me. Be comforted, my child, we will find your sister."

"She is not my sister, madam."

"Not your sister?"

"No, madam; but I owe her the love and tenderness of a mother and sister combined, for she saved us all from misery and want, my father, my mother and myself."

"How could a poor blind child do that?" asked the countess in great surprise.

"My father found her on the steps of the church

Henriette was interrupted by a low cry from the countess, and she saw that she had turned as pale as death. She stopped; but the countess said feverishly:

"On the steps of a church? Tell me when and where. You say she saved you all from misery—how?"

"From poverty so terrible that my father had not even bread to give us. Anxious to save at least, the life of his child, he took me, while my mother slept, and set out toward Notre Dame. Snow covered the steps of the church, and my father stood weeping and irresolute, when suddenly he heard a plaintive cry. He approached and saw a little baby half-buried under the snow. He took her to his breast to warm her benumbed and frozen limbs, when the thought came to him, as this child would have died had he not arrived in time to save it, so his own might die before help could reach her. 'I will leave neither of them, he said, and he returned carrying both infants in his arms."

The countess' eager attention to Henriette's words was painful, so anxious did she appear to hear more.

"Oh! go on, mademoiselle, go on," she cried, feverishly.

"Entering his home," said Henriette, continuing her story, "he said to mother, 'we had only one child, Heaven has sent us another,' and he was right, Heaven did reward his generous action, for on opening the clothing of the child a roll of gold was found, together with these words written on a scrap of paper: 'Her name is Louise—save her.'"

Again a low cry as of pain burst from the countess's quivering lips, and had she not grasped a chair for support, she would have fallen to the floor.

"Are you ill, madam?" asked Henriette, in surprise.

"No—no—I—it is nothing," gasped the stricken lady, "your sad story has moved me greatly. Then the infant fell among good and worthy people, did she not? Tell me all, all."

"Ah, madam. I cannot tell you how we loved her"

"Yes," said the countess, with a world of tenderness in her voice, "you have a noble, loving heart. Now I know why Maurice loves you. I will love you too. Indeed, I love you now." And she clasped the young girl in her arms.

"Then you will help me to find her?" pleaded Henriette.

"Help you!" exclaimed the countess, in excitement. "All Paris shall be searched from end to end.—But, gracious Heaven, she is blind! How is that, and how did you lose her? Tell me all."

At this moment a low, sad, sweet voice could be heard in the street, and so strangely familiar did the voice sound to Henriette, that she could hardly continue her story.

"Yes, madam, it was—one evening——"

"Go on, my child," said the countess, as Henriette paused and listened anxiously.

"About—abut two years ago——"

Again the voice was heard, and again Henriette's agitation became most intense.

"Two years ago, well!" repeated the countess, wondering at the young girl's hesitation.

"Yes—two years ago—Louise—was—there——"

"Henriette could not talk; it seemed that she must go to the window, and yet it would not do to offend the lady who had it in her power to save her sister.

"Go on," said the countess, looking at Henriette in astonishment. She had heard the voice; but it was only that of a street beggar, and could not interest her.

"She—was then fourteen—we were playing together one evening—when——"

Henriette could proceed no further.

The voice had approached nearer, and could now be heard very distinctly.

Henriette had recognized the voice of her sister—her sister who had been lost to her so long, and she gave utterance to a low scream.

"What is it?" asked the countess in alarm

"Hush! listen!" exclaimed the young girl.

Louise's song could now be heard plainly.

"I think I remember that song," said the countess half to herself.

"It is she, madam! it is she!" exclaimed Henriette running to the window and looking out.

At this moment Louise's plaintive voice could be heard calling in a tone of despair:

"Henriette! Henriette! do you hear me?"

"Louise, I am coming, I am coming,' screamed Henriette in reply, as she rushed towards the door.

"It is I, Louise, your sister," answered the voice of the poor street singer, and then her voice ended a wail as though cruel hands were clasping her by the throat to prevent her speaking.

"Come!" screamed Henriette, as she opened the door.

But her exit was barred by a troop of guards, with the Count de Linieres at their head, who were just entering the chamber, and one of them grasped Henriette firmly, thus preventing her from going to her sister's aid.

The agony of the poor girl who had seen her sister so near; but who was prevented from going to her, may be imagined but not written.

She had in the same instant found and lost her.

CHAPTER XX.

WITHOUT PITY.

For several moments Henriette could not understand why she was prevented from going out.

She knew that Louise was at that moment in the street below. She had seen that sister for whom she had searched so long, and just at the moment when she could clasp her in her arms once more, she found herself prevented by a guard of armed men.

In her frenzy she struggled with the stalwart men, thinking that she might force a passage and regain the street in time to meet her loved sister.

The countess sank half-fainting into a chair as she saw her husband enter upon an errand which she could only guess concerned her, and she at once conjectured that the Count de Linieres had discovered her secret which for so many years she had guarded.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, do not stop me!" exclaimed Henriette, as she saw how useless her struggles were.

The men looked at the count as if to ask for orders and he, rightly interpreting their looks, said in a cold, stern voice:

"Do your duty."

In a moment more Henriette was seized firmly by two of the guards, who awaited De Liniere's orders to carry her away.

"In the name of heaven let me go," implored the poor girl turning towards the count, "I tell you I must go to her, it is she, do you not hear? Her voice grows fainter. Oh, for Heaven's sake have pity, let me go, or I shall lose her again."

"Take this girl to Salpetriere!" exclaimed the count, who was not moved from his purpose by Henriette's passionate pleadings.

"Oh, no, no," implored the poor girl as the rough soldiers forced her away.

The countess seemed to recover a portion of her self-possession as Henriette was forced away. She understood now that she must rescue Louise before it was too late, and she rushed towards the door; but her husband barred the passage.

"At least let me go. I must go," she exclaimed, excitedly.

"You will remain where you are, madam," said the count, taking her almost roughly by the arm. "You have not yet told me what brought you here."

"Monsieur, I will later," frantically exclaimed the poor woman, almost beside herself with anxiety. "I will tell you all; but now let me go before she——"

"Of whom are you speaking, madam?" was the stern interruption.

"Of whom?" almost shrieked the countess. "Why, of—of—my——"

The poor woman could say no more. In her excitement she had almost said, "my child;" but she saw the count's stern, angry gaze fixed upon her, and she sank back in her chair in a dead swoon.

Count de Linieres gave a hard, cold look at his wife, without attempting to aid her, and then turning, left the room.

As he reached the street, he heard a sad, sweet voice singing in the distance; but to him it meant nothing, save the song of a street-beggar, and he paid no attention to it.

To two would it have spoken in tones of deepest misery had they heard it; but one was on her way to Salpetriere, and the other, in that attic-room unconscious of all that was passing around her.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRISON LIFE.

We have for a time, lost sight of Marianne Vanthier, the poor outcast, whom we saw in the third chapter, and now as we go to the prison of La Salpetriere, in which Henriette is confined, we see her again,

Marianne, the prisoner, is different from Marianne the outcast. Prison life has enabled her to exercise all that was good in her nature, without giving any opportunity for the use of those traits which were perverted by the ruffian, Jacques.

During her imprisonment she has won the hearts of her keepers and fellow prisoners, and all regard her with love. Indeed, so exemplary has been her life for the past three months that Sister Genevieve, the matron, has used every endeavor to procure her pardon.

Before we again speak of the principal character of our story, a glimpse of the life of the inmate of La Salpetriere may not prove uninteresting.

In those days, no work was furnished the unhappy prisoner, and day after day the weary monotony of cell and court-yard, was only broken by the religious teachings of the good sisters who were in charge of the place, or a conversation with each other in which the probable term of their imprisonment was the principal topic.

It is during a similar conversation that we enter the courtyard of the prison and find Marianne with some light work that has been given, by requst, to her, talking and trying to cheer several others, who are dragging out the weary term for which they are confined.

One of the women is seated a little apart from the rest, weeping over her hard lot, and it is to her that Marianne addresses herself.

"Do not grieve so, Florette," she says, soothingly.

"Oh, I can never live such a life as this," replied the poor girl, giving way anew to her grief.

"Try to work, it will make you forget your troubles."

"I can't work. I don't know how. I have never had any harder work to do than to amuse myself."

"That would be precious hard work in this place," remarked another, who had passed several years of the dreary maction of prison life.

"Our paths in life have been very different," said Marianne, with a sigh, as she thought of her own hard life. "I was compelled to work for a man who beat me and forced me to become a thief."

"Scores of admirers crowded around me, willing to ruin themselves for my amusement," said Florette, drying her eyes and speaking in a vivacious manner as she thought of her past triumphs.

"And it all comes to a prison, and eating gruel with a wooden spoon," said Julie, the one who had passed so many years in the prison.

"But you get accustomed to that," said Marianne, in a quiet, resigned tone.

"But it does not end there," persisted Julie: "to-day we shall be treated as those poor creatures were yesterday: hurried off with a guard of soldiers to see us safe on our way to exile."

"And a jeering crowd insulting and maltreating us," added Florette.

"Does the idea of exile frighten you?" asked Marianne.

"Who would not be frightened at the idea of a two month's voyage in the vilest company, and at the end of it to be landed in a wild country," replied Julie, with a great show of feeling.

"What will you do if they send you away?" asked Florette of Marianne.

"I shall try to be resigned. Perhaps I shall find some satisfaction in being sent away out of the reach of temptation. One can find plenty of work there."

"They say that women are scarce out there in Louisiana," said Julie complacently. "Maybe I shall find a husband, and revenge myself in that way."

"You may not be sent into exile," replied Marianne, hopefully. "Show yourself repentant and the sister superior will interest herself in your behalf."

Just at this time Sister Genevieve appeared at the

door of the prison, and all looked towards her in a manner that plainly showed how much love they entertained for her.

"She has been attending the sick, now she comes here to console the afflicted," said Marianne in a low voice.

"Well, for so good a woman, she is the meekest I ever saw," added Julie in a decided tone.

"What do I not owe her?" continued Marianne. "Her gentle words first awakened feelings in my heart that I thought long since dead. When I see those pure and humble women, who have nothing but virtues to confess, daily kneeling in prayer, what can I expect —I who am so guilty."

"And I too," said Florette.

"But they have taught me that I can atone for the past," said Marianne, still in a half-musing tone; "that every good deed will efface a fault committed."

"I am afraid I couldn't live long enough to balance the account," said Julie in a voice which expressed both jest and sadness.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the physician of the prison, who was none other than the same charitable doctor whom we saw at the Place St. Sulpice, and who would have benefitted Louise so greatly had he been allowed to do so.

As he entered, Sister Genevieve went eagerly towards him, displaying a nervousness that was very strange.

"Ah, doctor, I have been waiting impatiently for you," she said in a marvellously sweet voice.

"I am not late, I believe," replied the physician, as he glanced at his watch to assure himself that he was punctual to the time appointed.

"No," answered the sister; "but you led me to hope that when you came to-day you would bring me——"

"Good news," added the doctor while a smile of satisfaction and pleasure passed over his face. "Well, I have done everything in my power. I have spoken of the interest you take in this unfortunate woman; of her sincere repentance, and I even went so far as to add a few good qualities on my own account."

"You did wrong, doctor," said the good sister, in a tone which showed plainly that she was hurt at any subterfuge having been used, even though it was done to effect a purpose which she had very much to heart. "There is no cause sacred enough to justify the violation of the truth."

"You will thank me, nevertheless, sister," replied the doctor.

"Then you have succeeded?" was the eager question.

"Completely."

"Heaven be praised," said Sister Genevieve piously, as she clasped her hands, and breathed a prayer of thankfulness. Then turning to Marianne, she said: "Marianne, come here, my child. Here is our good doctor, who will tell you what he has done for you."

"For me?" asked the surprised girl as she went slowly towards them.

"You must thank Sister Genevieve, not me," said the physician. "Touched by your repentance, she has solicited and obtained your pardon and release."

For an instant Marianne did not understand all that the doctor's words meant; but when it flashed upon her mind that she was free; that now, thanks to the disinterested kindness of the sister, she was no longer a prisoner; no longer in danger of being sent into exile, she threw herself on her knees before Sister Genevieve, and clasping her hand, rained kisses and tears upon it in the fullness of her gratitude.

"My benefactress! My mother!" she exclaimed, in a voice almost choked with emotion.

"No, no," said Sister Genevieve quickly. "It was he who obtained it for you."

She pointed to the doctor, who was standing near, wiping away the tears which filled his eyes at such an exhibition of gratitude as Marianne furnished.

"No," he said gravely, "your release is granted to the good Sister Genevieve. To that good and noble woman, who, born within the walls of La Salpetriere, has never consented to cross its threshold; who has made this prison her country, and its unfortunate inmates her family; who brings to you all her daily blessing of consolation and prayer, so that the vilest here respect and love her——"

The doctor stopped abruptly; because on looking around upon the faces of the inmates who had gathered near them, he saw their cheeks bedewed with tears—tears of gratitude and love for the pure woman who was devoting her life to their welfare, and as his own eyes were not free from moisture, he thought it time to bring his remarks to a close.

Marianne still held the good sister's hand, and gazed up into her face as though she would impress those calm and placid features upon her heart indelibly.

They stood around the sister, silent and tearful, when the prison bell was rung loud and sharp.

It was the signal for the prisoners to retire to their cells, and they began to move towards their narrow, cheerless rooms.

"It is time to go in," said Sister Genevieve, cheerfully, and then taking Marianne's face between her hands, she imprinted a loving kiss upon her forehead, and said, gravely:

"This evening you will be free. Do not forget that I am responsible for you. Society has sent me a guilty woman; I return it a repentant one, I hope, Marianne."

CHAPTER XXII.

PICARD IN A NEW ROLE.

ALTHOUGH Henriette had been in La Salpetriere twenty-four hours when the events narrated in our last chapter occurred, Marianne had not seen her for the reason that the poor orphan had been ill.

Her sufferings had brought on a severe attack of sickness, and, happily for the poor girl, she had been unconscious, not even knowing that she was in a prison.

Instead of being confined in a cell she was taken to the prison hospital, and had just escaped from her keepers, and came running into the courtyard as Sister Genevieve spoke the words to Marianne which closes our last chapter.

With her hair unbound, a wild light in her eyes, and a hectic flush upon her cheeks, she rushed to the sister and knelt before her.

Although the appearance of the young girl was entirely different from what it was when Marianne last saw her, she knew her almost immediately.

"Good Heavens! is it possible?" she exclaimed in a tone of surprise, of almost fright.

"Oh, madam," cried Henriette, in imploring accents, "if you are the mistress here, have pity on me, and order them to set me free. I ask you on my knees."

The voice of the young girl convinced Marianne that she was indeed none other than one of the two who so generously befriended her the night when she gave herself up to the police.

"Be calm, my child," said Sister Genevieve, tenderly, as she stroked Henriette's long hair with a gentle, loving touch. "You are ill."

"Certainly you are," added the doctor, going towards her. "Why have you left your bed without my permission?"

"Oh, monsieur," said the poor girl, turning towards the gentle-voiced, pleasant-faced man who spoke so kindly "have you attended me in my illness?"

"Yes, yes, and I cannot permit you to act in this way."

"But, monsieur, I am well now," said Henriette, going towards the doctor. "Thanks to your care, I am well again. They left me alone for a few moments and I arose and dressed myself Now that you see I

am quite well, you will tell them to let me go, will you not?"

The doctor gazed at her compassionately for a moment before answering.

"That is impossible. To release you from this place requires a far greater power than mine."

"This place?" asked the young girl in surprise. "Why, what is it? Is it not a hospital?"

"A hospital and a prison," replied the physician, gravely.

"A prison!" exclaimed Henriette, in terror, and striving to remember how she came to be in such a place.

At last the events of the past few hours came back to her mind, until gradually she understood all

"Ah, I remember," she said at length. "Yes, I remember the soldiers who dragged me hither, and him who commanded them. Oh, my God, what have I done to be crushed like this!"

And falling prone upon the earth, the poor stricken one wept scalding tears of anguish.

She knew now that her sister was in the power of unscrupulous wretches, and her cup of sorrow seemed to be running over with the knowledge that she was unable to render her poor blind sister any assistance, even if she had known exactly where she was at that moment.

For an instant the three gazed in pity at the grief-stricken girl before them, and then turning away to hide his tears, the doctor said:

"Sister, this is not a case for my care. You must be the physician here."

"I have seen many guilty women," said Sister Genevieve: "but this one——"

"Is not guilty, sister," interrupted Marianne quickly.

"Do you know her?"

"When I came here," said Marianne, "I told you that on that very day, overwhelmed with despair, I had attempted to destroy myself."

"Yes, I remember."

"And how I had been prevented from adding that crime to my many sins by two young girls, angels of virtue and goodness. This is one of them."

"How is it possible that she should be here?" asked Sister Genevieve, half to herself.

"Misfortune may have overtaken her, but I am sure that vice has never sullied her life," replied Marianne, with great assurance.

The good sister raised Henriette from the ground and attempted to soothe her grief.

"Courage, my child, look up," she said kindly.

Henriette made no sign of recognition, and Marianne went more closely to her.

"Look at me, mademoiselle. Do you not remember the woman who wished to drown herself?"

"You—you," faltered the poor girl, striving to recall the events which had passed, and which, in her misery, seemed to have occurred years before, instead of only a few weeks. "Ah, yes, I remember you too well!" she exclaimed, as the events of that fatal night when she was separated from her sister, came upon her like some pestilence-laden blast of air. "Alas! we were together then—that was before they dragged me away from her. You saw her—my poor sister."

"I told madam that you were as pure as an angel."

"Yes, madam, I am innocent," exclaimed Henriette, earnestly, and in a manner that could not but carry conviction with it. "I call Heaven to witness, I swear——"

"Do not swear, daughter," said Sister Genevieve, in a mildly reproving voice "I believe you would not be guilty of the shameful sin of falsehood."

"No, no," answered Henriette, quickly.

While this conversation was going on, a man had approached the prison gates, and after showing the sister in charge, a paper signed by the Minister of Police, giving him permission to visit the prison, was admitted, and proceeded directly to Sister Geneviere.

The person who just entered was our old friend, Picard the magnificent.

"By whose orders were you sent here?" asked the sister, as she looked earnestly at the rather singular appearing young man.

"By order of the Count de Linieres, madam.'

"Who are you, sir?" she asked, rather surprised at the messenger the count had sent.

"First valet de-chambre to his excellency, the minister of police," replied Picard, laying his hand on his heart in an affected manner, and making a very low bow.

"Then it is by his orders," said the usually very mild sister, in a stern voice, "that this poor child is——"

"Alas, madam," interrupted Picard, "the honor of an illustrious house must be protected."

"You are a witness that I refused the hand of the chevalier," said Henriette passionately, and appealing to the valet with all the force of her gentle nature.

"Is that so, monsieur?" asked Sister Genevieve.

"That is true, I am compelled to admit it," replied Picard with another, and a lower bow.

"Madam, I told you she was innocent," said Marianne, overjoyed at this proof of Henriette's guiltlessness.

"If madam the Superior will allow me to inform the young lady of the further wishes of his excellency, the minister of police, I think I can make her understand," said Picard seeing that this interview was not tending to give those around him that exalted idea of his dignity which he was ever careful to preserve, and wishing to terminate the interview as soon as possible.

"You may do so," said the sister gravely. Then turning to Henriette and kissing her, she said: "Have courage, my child, and trust in Heaven."

As the Sister Superior left the courtyard and entered the hospital Marianne pressed close to Henriette and whispered:

"Courage, courage, mademoiselle," and then followed Sister Genevieve.

"We are alone," said Henriette as soon as Marianne had gone. "What new misery do you bring me, you whom I thought devoted to your master, and yet come here to betray him?"

"Come, come, mademoiselle," said Picard, growing confused, strange to say, at the words of the young girl, "that is too bad, to have you reproach me too. Because the master I deceive is the minister of police."

"But Monsieur de Vaudrey—what of him?"

"He refused to obey his uncle—and—and yesterday he was sent to the Bastile."

"He too, is a prisoner then?" exclaimed Henriette in despair. The chevalier was the only one to whom she could look for assistance in escaping from the dreadful place in which she was confined, and now that she knew that he was unable to assist her, all hope fled, and she could see no way of escape from the [illegible] that were being drawn so closely around her.

"Yes, he is in the Bastile," said Picard in a mournful tone. "He made me swear to come to this prison, and tell you that if at the worst they decided to send you into exile to Louisiana——"

"Exile! Louisiana! Why that would be death!" exclaimed the poor girl in distress.

"Wait a little, mademoiselle," said Picard confidently, "if my pretended master comes to that decision he will release my real master from the Bastile, and once he gets out of there, why off he goes, followed by your humble servant. We overtake the guard having you in charge, with the gold, with which we will take care to be provided, my real master will bribe the servants of my other master, and if they should be incorruptible—that is, if we have not money enough with us to buy them, why then we will share your exile, and we will be happy in spite of the treachery of my other master."

In order that the reader may fully understand Picard's speech, we will briefly state how it was that while appearing at the prison as the Count de Lin-

iere's valet, he was still obeying the chevalier's commands.

When Picard and his master left Henriette's chamber, the day on which she was arrested, the valet's sympathies were aroused in her cause and as soon as the chevalier was sent to the Bastile, Picard proposed to him that it would be better if he (Picard,) should again enter the service of the minister of police; for, by that means he would be enabled to be of some service both to the chevalier, whom he considered to be his real master, and to Henriette.

When Picard spoke of their yet being happy again, Henriette said sadly:

"You speak to me of happiness. But Louise, my darling sister, who will search for her?"

"Where am I?" asked Picard with a show of wounded vanity. "Do I count for nothing? Do you suppose that a member of the secret police of his excellency, the minister, is going to fold his arms quietly? No, indeed. Come, come, mademoiselle, don't worry yourself. I will arrange everything. Then if they want my head they can come and take it. I am ready."

And Picard struck an attitude of courage and self-sacrifice.

Just at this moment, as if summoned by the valet's boasting words, an officer, attended by a file of soldiers, presented himself at the gate, and after showing his order for admission, entered.

Picard was so engrossed by his bold defiance to the minister of police that he did not notice anything around him, and therefore he did not see the guards, until he heard an exclamation of alarm from Henriette.

"Good Heavens! Look there!"

Surprised by her cry, Picard looked in the direction designated by her extended finger, and as he saw the soldiers he lost all outward signs of bravery.

"Good gracious, have they taken me at my word?" he asked in affright, and at the same time putting his hand on his head as if to assure himself that it still rested securely upon his shoulders.

Hearing the noise of the opening gate, Sister Genevieve, accompanied by Marianne and the doctor, came out of the hospital, and seeing her, the officer of the guard advanced, and after making a low salute, said:

"Sister Superior, I have the honor to hand you the list of prisoners, who are condemned to exile. If you will permit me to order the prisoners to be assembled here, we can proceed to identify them."

"You may do so, mousieur," said Sister Genevieve. "I will follow you."

Several times she attempted to open and read the fatal list which she held in her hands, and each time she was prevented by the intensity of her feelings.

At last, with an effort, she opened the paper, and gave one quick glance at the names it contained. Then with a suppressed cry she fixed her eyes on Henriette in an unutterably sad look.

"Madam," cried the poor girl, warned by that look that the paper boded no good to her. "Why do you look at me so? answer me, for pity's sake; but have mercy."

"Ah, my poor child," sighed the sister, but she could say no more, for Henriette's eyes were fixed upon her face in the most beseeching manner.

The few words which Sister Genevieve had uttered, were enough to show the poor orphan that the worst which could be done by the minister was now to be executed against her.

She had clung to the hope that the chevalier might assist her in her hour of trial, and Picard's words had strengthened that belief; but she saw now that all hope was vain. The pitying looks cast upon her by Sister Genevieve, Marianne and the doctor, spoke her doom only too plainly. There was no hope for her. She must go into exile, and all hope of ever seeing her blind sister was at an end.

As these thoughts flashed over her, her strength gave way, and again she sank helplessly upon the ground, murmuring:

"Alas! I am condemed! I am lost, lost!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO ONE THAN THIS.

HENRIETTE'S cry of despair as she understood that she was condemned to exile, rang through the corridors of the prison, causing all who heard it to shudder involuntarily.

In the intensity of her grief, which had caused the cry, it sounded more like the wail of a strong man in his agony, rather than that of a young girl.

Picard evinced the greatest consternation.

tile and inform the chevalier."

Henriette turned to Marianne, who was standing near in the hopes that she might be able to render some assistance, she said in a world-weary voice:

"Ah! now I can understand why one may wish to die"

"Do not speak so, mademoiselle," entreated Marianne. "Remember the words of hope you spoke to me."

"If you have a family, think of them," said the good doctor, anxious to turn the thoughts of the poor girl to something beside her own misery.

"Think of master, the Chevalier," said Picard, in a tone which plainly said: "Remember the plan which we have formed for your escape."

"Ah, monsieur," said Henriette to the physician. "Exile has no terrors for me. I do not weep for my own misfortunes.".

"She has a sister of whom she was the sole support," explained Marianne, "A sister who is blind."

"I had found her at the moment when they arrested me," added Henriette, sorrowfully. "I heard her voice. I saw her. She was covered with rags, and her beautiful golden hair fell in disorder on her shoulders. She was being dragged along by an horrible old woman who I know ill-treats her—beats her perhaps, and they would not let me go to her. Now I have lost her forever—forever."

And again the sorely tried girl burst into a flood of bitter tears, while Marianne supported the slight form in her arms.

"Wait a minute, my child," exclaimed the physician, as a sudden thought flashed over him. "I believe I have met that very same girl."

"You, monsieur?" exclaimed Henriette, in surprise.

"Yes, yes, a young girl led by an old woman who called her Louise."

"Yes, yes, that's her name," and the young girl now became breathless with excitement.

"I know the old woman, too. She is called La Frochard," continued the doctor, while Henriette listened anxiously to every word he spoke.

"La Frochard!" exclaimed Picard quickly. "An old hag who goes about whining for alms in the name of Heaven and seven small children? Where does she live?"

Marianne shuddered.

She knew full well what mercy any one might expect at the hands of the Frochards, and she resolved that the blind girl should be rescued from their vile grasp.

"She lives in a hovel by the river side," she said quickly, and as if it pained her ever to be obliged to speak of the family. "It was formerly used as a boat-house; but has long been occupied by thieves, and the worst class of criminals. There is a secret entrance from the Rue Noir; but it is difficult to find, and is always carefully guarded."

"Never mind that," said Picard, contemptuously, "the police of Paris can find their secret entrances; if not we'll capture the main one. I must go to the Bastile first, and try to effect my master's release. Then we will go to this boat-house."

And away Picard darted in the greatest haste, full of the importance of the task he had undertaken, and resolved to accomplish it at any cost.

"You are sure she lives there?" asked Henriette, eagerly, and forgetting for the moment that she was a prisoner, hurried towards the gate. "Then we will go at once. Thank God that I have found my dear sister again."

As she reached the gate she suddenly remembered her cruel position, and how impossible it was for her to take a single step towards liberating her sister.

The shock was a great one, and she sank down cowering and trembling, while she murmured in a choked, stifled voice:

"Oh, I am to be sent away—away from her."

"No, no, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Marianne passionately, as she caught Henriette's hand, and pressed it to her lips, "you need not—you shall not be sent away."

"What do you mean?" asked the doctor, as soon as he could wipe away his tears, for Marianne's positive assurance startled him.

"I need not be sent away!" repeated Henriette. "Look at these guards who have been sent to take me, who wait for me," and she pointed to the soldiers who stood like grim statues, ranged along the side of the yard. And as she looked upon their stern faces that seemed never to have known what pity was, her grief broke out anew.

"Oh, Louise, my sister, my poor darling," she wailed, while she covered her face with her hands as if to shut out the sight of those who were to force her to leave France and her sister, branded as a fallen woman.

"I tell you that you need not go," insisted Marianne, eagerly.

"What do you mean was," was the unhappy girl's question.

At this moment, the unfortunate prisoners whose names were on the list of those condemned to exile, entered the court-yard, accompanied by the officer of the guard.

The kind-hearted Sister Genevieve, whose duty it was to inform the unhappy creatures of their hard fate, had remained within the prison walls, as if to spare herself the pain of seeing the poor creatures as they were dragged away.

In order not to be overheard by the officer, Marianne went close to the doctor, and whispered:

"Doctor, have pity on her, and consent to help me."

Before she could say more, or even hear the physician's reply, the officer who had been consulting his list, said:

"I need another prisoner to complete the list, Henriette Gerard!"

Henriette started as though she had received a blow, but before she could speak, Marianne ran towards the guard, saying:

"Here, monsieur."

The act took Henriette so completely by surprise, that she could only give utterance to a low cry, which sounded more like a groan.

In an instant the doctor had comprehended all that Marianne would do, and although the sacrifice was greater than seemed possible for a human being to make, he did not attempt to prevent it, but grasped Henriette by the arm to prevent her from speaking.

"Your sister's fate depends upon your silence!" he whispered, and under the influence of that magic name she was silent.

The officer motioned Marianne to take her place with the other prisoners, but she said imploringly:

"Permit me, monsieur, to bid her a last farewell."

He motioned an impatient consent, and Marianne crossing over to Henriette, folded her in a last embrace.

Now did the poor orphan fully understand all that the outcast had consented to do for her, and much as she loved her sister she could not accept the sacrifice.

"No—no," she murmured. "I cannot, I will not consent."

"Hush!" exclaimed Marianne, placing her hand over her companion's mouth. "It is not you whom I save, Henriette, it is myself. If I remain, Jacques will find me again, and once in his power I should be lost. You will remain, you will find Louise, and you will both be saved."

Again did the spell which Louise's name cast over Henriette prevent her from protesting against the fearful sacrifice which was being made for her, and she murmured her sister's name in a dazed, happy way.

"Here, take this," said Marianne, as she handed her the paper which only a short time before she had received with so many expressions of delight.

It was the pardon which allowed her to go out of La Salpetriere a free woman, and now she was about to give it up that Henriette might be saved, and of her own free will, she was about to go into a voluntary, life-long exile.

"A greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend," is written in the Book; but surely Marianne's love and gratitude far exceeded this, for she was dooming herself to a whole life-time of misery.

Henriette could not take the pardon so freely offered, and Marianne looked at the doctor as if to implore him to induce the poor girl to do so.

"Take it," he said in a low voice, "Your sister's fate depends upon it."

After some hesitation, Henriette took the paper which Marianne had thrust into her hand, and then flinging her arms around the woman who had thus saved her, sobbed out her thanks.

At this most inopportune moment, Sister Genevieve came slowly out of the prison, towards the two weeping girls.

"The Sister Superior!" ejaculated the physician in dismay. "All is lost!"

"Heaven would not permit it!" exclaimed Henriette.

All felt that Marianne's generous action could not be consummated; for there was no hope that the good Sister, who looked upon deception as a heinous crime could be persuaded to tell a falsehood.

"Madam," said the officer to the Sister, "will you please verify this list, and identify the prisoners who are intended for exile."

Now indeed was all lost, since Sister Genevieve must identify each one.

In a slow monotonous voice the officer read over the name of each one, and waited until the Sister had declared that they were among the condemned.

The name of Henriette Girard was the last on the list, and when the officer pronounced it, Marianne ran and knelt down at the Sister's feet, exclaiming:

"Here, mother!"

"You?" exclaimed the sister in surprise; but before she could say any more the doctor stood before her, and pointing to Henriette, who was uttering a silent prayer, not daring to look towards either of the group, made a most appealing gesture.

"Mother, mother, have pity," cried Marianne earnestly, "bless me and let me go; for this exile will purify a guilty soul, and save an innocent one."

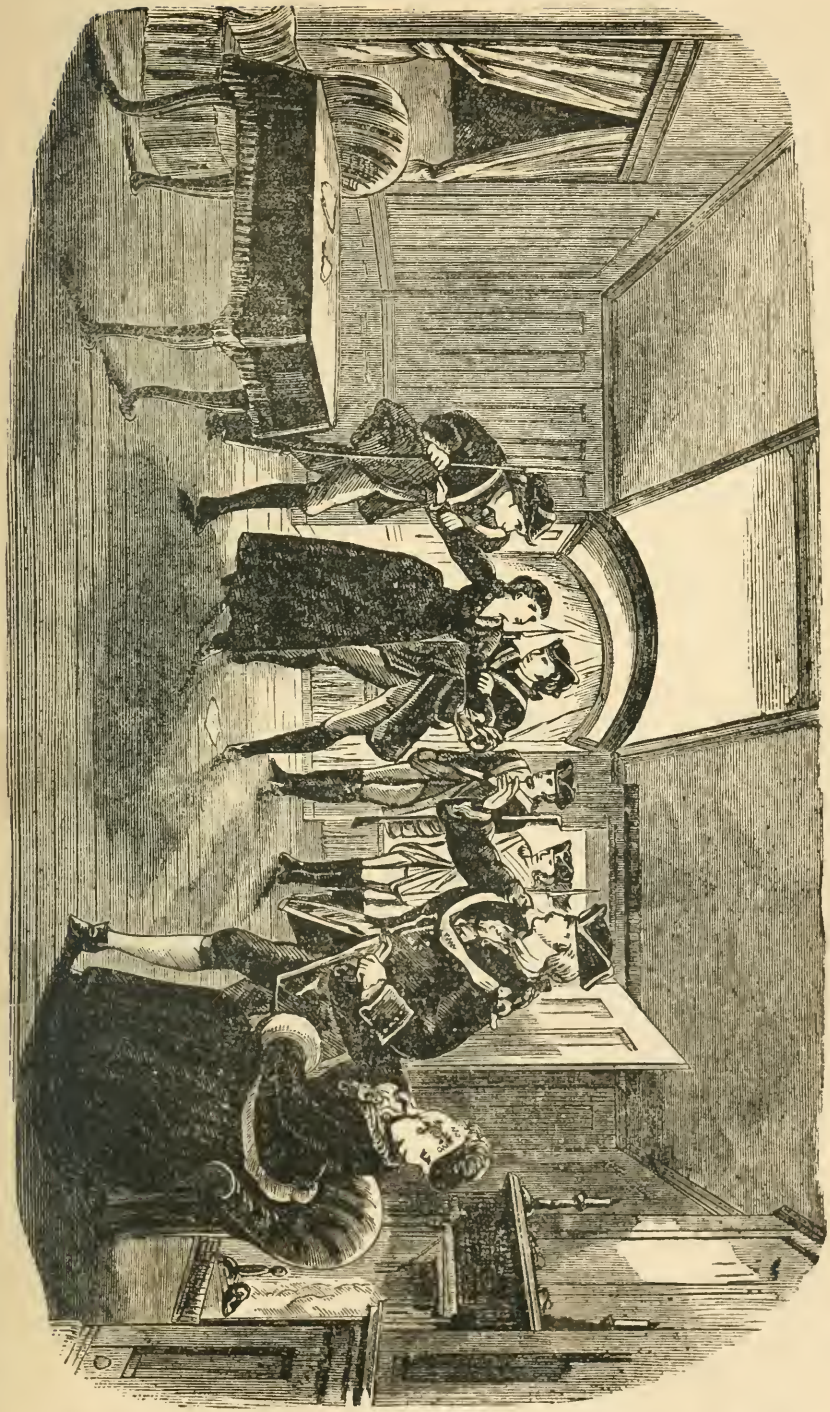
Several times did Sister Genevieve attempt to speak and each time did her tongue refuse to do its duty.

Gladly would she have made any sacrifice; but could she tell a lie?

"Well, Sister?" said the officer who had grown weary with the singular delay.

The struggle was most intense; but at last she placed her hands on either side of Marianne's face, and stooping over kissed her fervently.

Then raising her eyes to Heaven, as if imploring divine forgiveness for the sin she was about to com-



Henriette prevented from going to her sister's rescue.

mit, she said, in a voice which trembled, despite her most strenuous efforts to make it appear firm.

"Yes!"

Thus did Heaven interpose to save Henriette from the dreadful fate that threatened her, but it demanded as a sacrifice that another should suffer in her place, and that a pure, almost holy woman, should take upon herself the sin of a falsehood as she regarded it; but who shall say, that in the last great day, any record of that falsehood shall be found.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRUELTY AND SUFFERING.

AGAIN do we find the poor blind girl in the squalid hut of the Frochards. Their cruelty has so worn upon the young girl, that she has wasted away to but a shadow of her former self, and now seems hardly able to walk.

We find her lying upon her miserable straw bed, in a light, troubled sleep, while over her, bends Pierre, the honest-hearted cripple.

As he gazes upon her attenuated features, the tears of pity and love flood his eyes, and he murmurs:

"Poor child! so young—so weak—so lovely, and yet condemned to so hard a fate. Ah, me, I can do nothing. Jacques suspects and watches me. If I were to gain courage enough to make one step towards her release, he would discover it and kill me. Then what would become of her? I shudder to think of it."

He had unconsciously spoken the last words quite loud, and they awoke the poor girl.

Raising herself upon her arm, she asked in a timid voice:

"Who is there?"

"It is I, ma'amzelle—Pierre."

"Ah, Pierre!" she exclaimed, with a sigh of relief and thankfulness. "I am glad it is you. I may sleep a little longer, may I not?"

"Sleep, ma'amzelle, sleep don't be frightened, I will not leave you."

In the greatness of Pierre's sympathy he reached out and stroked the miserable rags which served the poor girl as a dress.

"Oh, I am so tired!" she exclaimed, as she laid down again upon the hard bed, and tried to cover herself with the few pieces of cloth that served her as a covering.

As tenderly as could a mother cover her darling did Pierre draw the scanty clothes over Louise's wasted form, and with tender solicitude did he watch over her until she lost herself in sleep again.

"Yes, sleep, poor child, he said as he watched her, "and forget your misery. She seems calmer now: perhaps she is dreaming of happier days, of those she loves, and who love and weep for her now. Jacques has forbidden me to think of her; but I can defy him there. I will think of her; yes, and save her too, even if it cost me my life! Yes, yes, that would be better—die for her if I can save her. I can weaken these bolts and Jacques will not discover it."

As Pierre thought of this chance for escape he caught up a screw driver, and running to the door began taking out the screws.

While he was thus engaged the thought flashed over him that the act he was committing was equivalent to signing his own death warrant, and he hesitated.

"What am I doing?" he exclaimed. "Alas! I shall have to pay for this with my life—no, no. I cannot!"

Just as he arrived at this conclusion Louise moved uneasily in her sleep, and in a low, sweet voice she murmured:

"Henriette—sister, sister."

Pierre went hastily toward her, thinking she had heard something; but he soon understood why she had spoken.

"She was dreaming of her sister," he said. "A smile lights up her pallid face. She never smiles when she is awake. Oh, if I help her to escape, and her happy dreams become a reality, she would remember me with pity, perhaps with love."

These thoughts invited him to action, and he resolved to continue his labors.

"I have begun my work," he said resolutely, "and I will finish it."

But it was destined that he should do no more toward it on that night; for just as he had spoken his mother entered. She gave a quick, suspicious look around, and then in her shrill, metalic voice exclaimed:

"Hello! master knife-grinder; what brings you home so early? No work outside, eh?"

"It is growing dark, so I brought my work home with me," answered Pierre, going to his wheel and commencing to work.

"So as to be near Ma'amzelle Louise, you mean," sneered the old woman. "I have my eye on you."

"It would be better to have your eye on Jacques; but you never find fault with him."

"Why should I? he is the oldest, and master here," replied the old hag, as she began her preparations for dinner."

"Where is he now?" asked Pierre.

"At his work, to be sure," answered Mother Frochard, with a touch of pride in her voice. "He has worked two days this week, think of that! Isn't it a shame that a handsome fellow like him should have to work."

"Don't I work every day in the week?" asked Pierre, who could not see why it should be shameful for his brother to have to work, and a matter of course that he should be busy from early morning until late at night.

"What else are you fit for?" sneered the old woman as she surveyed her son's deformed body with a look almost of disgust.

The tears gathered in the cripple's eyes; but he managed to restrain them, and as Jacques entered, he had turned and resumed his work.

There was a deep frown on Jacques' brow as he entered the hut with an angry gesture, tore off the leathern apron he had been wearing at his labor, flung himself down in the nearest chair, and with a growl of displeasure, exclaimed:

"I have had enough of it—no more work for me. I am tired of it."

"It is tiresome, isn't it, my son?" remarked the old woman soothingly.

"It's disgusting!" assented Jacques.

And turning to light his pipe, he saw Pierre, who, leaning against his wheel, was listening to the difference between his mother's reception of her two sons.

"Hello, Master Cupid. Are you there?" he cried in his rough, commanding voice. "Go sharpen my cutlass, you'll find it at the wine shop in the back street."

"Very well," answered Pierre in a quiet way.

"What is this?" asked Jacques, as he arose, and went towards the bed where Louise lay. "Asleep, he? Why isn't she at work?"

"That's what I want to know," chimed in the old woman. "She's sleeping instead of working for a living."

"Why, she is so used to it that she cries when she is asleep," laughed Jacques, as he saw the great tears rolling down the poor girl's wasted cheeks.

"Is she crying?" asked Pierre anxiously, as he went towards the bed.

"What's that to you?" fiercely demanded Jacques.

"She is an obstinate, lazy hypocrite," replied the old woman, pronouncing each word with an emphasis, as she sliced the vegetables for the evening's soup. "This morning I had to push her along to make her walk at all, and as to singing, she has no more voice than a crow."

"I will make her sing if I try," exclaimed Jacques

coarsely, and at the same time making a motion as if he would drag her from the bed.

"You will kill her," cried Pierre, springing towards his brother as though he would prevent him from touching the poor girl. "Can't you see that she is sick?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mother Frochard. "She is shamming, I know her tricks."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Jacques.

"She has got some new notion in her head. I can't tell what," replied his mother.

"I can tell you," said Pierre. "You remember the night of the snow storm. After finishing her song, she cried out at the top of her voice, 'Henriette! Henriette! my sister——"

"Yes, and I stopped her mouth pretty quick," said the old woman, chuckling to herself.

"Yes—yes—you twisted her arm until you nearly broke it," and as Pierre thought of the brutal treatment to which Louise was subjected that night, the sobs came so fast as to almost prevent his speaking.

"Well, why didn't she mind me?" asked La Frochard unconcernedly.

"You're killing her."

"I can't afford to support her in idleness. She must work, or if she won't——"

"I'll find the way to make her," said Jacques, finishing the sentence his mother had begun.

"You! What would you do?" asked Pierre, trembling with fear.

"That is my business."

By this time the old woman had finished her preparations for dinner, and after putting the food over the fire to cook, she went to the poor blind girl, who, entirely exhausted by the long walks she was obliged to take, had remained sound asleep during the time they had been conversing.

With no gentle hand, the old hag grasped the young girl by the arm, and dragged her to her feet.

"Come, get up my fine lady" she said. "No more airs, you must go out and earn your living. Here, make your toilette first. Let down this hair," and the old wretch gave Louise's heavy hair a sudden wrench, and it fell rippling about her form.

"Give me that shawl, and take off this scarf, they keep you too warm," and as she spoke La Frochard took the articles she had spoken of, from the girl, and put them on herself, tying the scarf carefully around her own throat. "You'll shiver more comfortably without these things."

"And that is what they call making her toilette," muttered Pierre to himself.

CHAPTER XXV.

TORTURE.

LOUISE stood trembling with fear and cold, as the old woman was thus preparing her to go out begging, and she had need of all her strength even to stand, much less walk.

She could hardly be worse off than she was now, and she resolved to brave the power of her tormentors.

"Eh? eh? What next?" asked the old woman sharply, and turning to Jacques she said with a sneer. "Do you hear that? She does not wish to go out.

"We'll see about that," and the threat implied in Jacques' brutal tones caused the poor girl to tremble as if in an ague fit

Pierre saw the storm that was gathering, and knew that it must soon break upon the blind girl's defenseless head. Anxious to save her all the trouble he could, he went close to her and whispered warningly.

"Take care!"

"Come here, my little beauty," said Jacques coarsely, as he attempted to take her hand.

"I forbid you to touch me," exclaimed the poor girl, recoiling in horror from his villainous touch.

"Oh, ho," sneered the brute in human form, "then we are no longer friends."

"You! Friends!" exclaimed Louise. "You're cruel wretches.

"Yet you were glad enough to share our home when we picked you up in the streets."

"Yes. I was grateful to you then, because you offered me a shelter. Alas, I learned too soon that it was not pity for my misfortunes that moved you. No, no, you wanted to make use of my affliction. You have starved, tortured, beaten me; but now, feeble as I am, my will shall be stronger than your violence. I will beg no more!"

As Louise thus declared her intention of submitting no longer to the commands of her tormentors, she stood erect, and her slight form seemed to expand, and for the moment she undoubtedly had the strength to resist; but alas! only for a moment could she expect to have strength enough even to permit of her standing erect.

"When her blood is up she is superb," said Jacques gazing with admiration upon her.

"Oh, well, well," laughed the old woman, "that is all mighty fine; but where is the bread and butter to come from?"

"I care not," said Louise, firmly.

"Do you hear?" asked Pierre of his mother, while he gazed at Louise in alarm. "Do you know what she means? She will starve rather than beg."

"Nonsense," was the sneering reply. "She will get tired of that soon enough."

"Never!" cried the blind girl.

"Well, we'll see if locking you up in that garret won't bring you to your senses."

And the old woman laughed as she saw the flush of fear that passed over the poor girl's face, and she noticed that her attitude was not so defiant.

"If I enter that place, I shall never leave it alive," said Louise piteously.

"Poor child! poor child!" exclaimed Pierre, as he turned away to hide his tears.

"Why she is magnificent," said Jacques in admiration. "I'd never have believed that she had so much spirit."

As he spoke he went towards the trembling girl, and tried to kiss her; but she managed to escape from him.

As Jacques attempted this outrage, Pierre rushed forward as though he would strike him to the earth; but he checked himself, and exclaimed in a voice filled with reproach:

"Jacques!"

"Well, what is it? You don't like it, I suppose, Master Cupid. Well, forbid it, why don't you?"

"I do."

And Pierre was about to rush forward again; but Jacques' threatening attitude caused him to stop, and he went to a further corner of the room, muttering to himself:

"Oh, miserable, cowardly wretch that I am," and he sobbed like a child at the thought of his own cowardice.

"Come, come along," said the old woman, taking Louise again by the arm, and dragging her towards the steps. "You're strong enough when you want to be. Up into the garret with you," and the old wretch, half-carried, half-dragged the poor girl along, until at the steps Louise fell from her grasp, and lay upon the stairs, seemingly too feeble to move.

"Yes, that is right, mother, take her up," said Jacques, encouragingly, "get her out of the way. Oh, come here, I want to speak to you," he added, as he suddenly thought of some message that he had forgotten.

The old woman hurried down to hear what her darling son had to say, and as she left Louise where she had fallen upon the stairs, Pierre took the

opportunity of slipping around on the opposite side of the stair-case, and whispering:

"You can escape. I have unscrewed the lock. The key to the street door is under your mattress. Trust to Heaven to guard you. Nothing worse can happen than threatens you here."

He finished whispering just in time to hear Jacques say to his mother:

"Lock her up securely. I have my reasons for distrusting Master Cupid."

"Yes, yes, I understand," replied the old woman, shaking her head knowingly.

"Come, my innocent, hard working brother," ordered Jacques, in a sneering tone. "Come with me, I want you."

"I have work here," answered Pierre, as he went to his wheel, and commenced to work.

"And I have work for you elsewere," exclaimed Jacques in an angry tone, and with a menacing gesture. "I told you to sharpen my cutlass. Come with me, and keep your whining for this blind beauty until another time. Come along, I say."

The cripple did not dare to disobey his brother's orders when they were given in that manner, and he started slowly towards him, murmuring:

"Ah! if I had anything but water in my veins, I'd do something more than whine."

CHAPTER XXVI.

VISITORS.

As the door closed upon her two sons, the old woman gave way to her feelings of admiration for her handsome Jacques.

Louise lay on the stairs as rigid as if she had been carved from stone.

La Frochard seated herself by the table, and communed with herself.

"Ah! what a splendid fellow Jacques is. The very image of his dear father. There was a man for you; but they cut off his head. Ah! it makes me sick to think of it. I must take something to strengthen me."

Mother Frochard had great faith in the virtue of brandy as a means of strengthening herself, and she commenced to search in her capacious pocket for the brandy bottle which she always carried.

"Yes, yes, young woman," she said threateningly, as she continued her search, "I'll attend to you in a minute."

She had found the bottle, and taking a long draught, she exclaimed:

"Ah! that warms my heart!" Then after another drink, she said, much as she would have said had Louise been before her instead of lying on the stairs in nearly a swoon. "We'll see how you enjoy a couple of days starvation. Yes, Jacques is right, we must break your obstinate spirit. Then when you come out you won't refuse to help your friends make an honest living."

Another deep pull at the bottle, and the old hag was ready for any work, however wicked. With a fiendish look upon her face, she went to the blind girl, and, taking her by the arms, forced her to stand.

"Shamming again, are you? Stand up and come with me," and the old wretch began to pull the poor girl up the dilapidated stairs.

"Oh, madame," screamed Louise in an agony of terror, as she fully understood that she was about to be confined again in the garret, "have you no soul, no pity? Do not kill me!"

"I don't intend to, you're too valuable," replied the old woman, who had succeeded in getting Louise to the door, and opening it, she thrust her in. "There get in with you, I'll see you safe inside."

So frantically did the terrified girl cling to the old woman's garments, that she found it impossible to shake her off, and was obliged to go in with her, until she could treat her into something approaching a state of submission.

* * * * * *

While La Frochard is thus pleasantly engaged, we will, in a few brief words, explain what happened after Marianne was carried away into exile.

Henriette remained at La Salpetriere until nightfall, and in the meantime the Count de Linieres had received notice that she had embarked in the prison-ship. He at once gave Picard the necessary orders for the release of the chevalier, and at dusk he and Henriette and De Vaudrey were together, discussing plans for the release of Louise.

Picard proved a valuable aid in the matter, and before Henriette had been out of prison an hour, she was on her way to find the blind girl from whom she had been separated so long.

They had no difficulty in procuring a warrant for the arrest of Jacques and his mother, and a guard to execute it, and thus armed with the power of the law, they anticipated no trouble.

The boat-house occupied by the Frochards had, as the reader will remember, an entrance opening on the Seine which was seldom used, and the only other means of entering the house was through a long, dark passage leading from the Rue Noir. At the entrance of this passage the rescuing party halted, and it was then decided that Picard should lead the guards around to the door on the river side, while the chevalier should proceed through the passage, contriving to reach the house at the same time the soldiers did.

It was thought necessary that the chevalier should go to the next street where he could watch the movements of the guards and thus time his own movements. Leaving Henriette at the entrance of the passage, with many cautions that she should not stir from the spot, he hurried away.

To the young girl, who had thus waited the preparations which were to restore her to her sister, the time passed with leaden wings, and she could not remain inactive. She resolved to enter the house in advance of the others and thus have the pleasure of clasping her sister in her arms a few moments sooner.

Alone she threaded the dark, noisome passage. Alone she pursued her rash journey, prompted by her great love for her sister, braving all the horrors of that viper's den in order that she might meet her sister a few moments sooner.

* * * * * *

Mother Frochard descended from the garret; she had left Louise insensible, and, having thus performed her duty, betook herself to the consolation which she could derive from her brandy bottle.

Suddenly she heard a knock at the door, and starting in affright she hid her bottle among some of the cooking-utensils that littered the table, and advancing to the door asked:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

It was Henriette's voice that answered from the outside.

"I am looking for some one—for Madam Frochard."

"What do you want of her?" asked the old woman, suspiciously, and making no motion toward opening the door.

"I must speak with her."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes, I am alone."

The answer seemed to satisfy La Frochard, for she immediately unfastened the door saying:

"Well, if you are alone you may come in."

Henriette entered, and but a single look at the squalid place frightened her. The whole house looked a fit abode for murderers and thieves, and the appearance of the old woman seemed to heighten that impression.

"Great Heavens! can this be the place?" she asked herself in astonishment.

As she stood in the center of the room, gazing with

fear and trembling, upon every object. Mother Frochard was favoring her with suspicious looks.

"Well, young woman," she said after waiting a few moments for Henriette to speak, "you want to see Madame Frochard, what have you got to say to her?"

Still Henriette hesitated, and placed her hand upon her heart to still its tumultuous beatings.

"Come, what is it?" again asked the old woman impatiently. "What are you looking for? Do you expect to find any one here?"

This question aroused Henriette to the sense of the the mission which had brought her to this fearful place, and she answered quickly.

"Yes, yes. I am looking for the person who lives here with you."

"What person?" and Mother Frochard's metallic voice was harder and shriller than ever.

"A young girl," answered Henriette.

"Ah ha," thought the old woman, "this must be the sister." Then she said in an indifferent voice. "I don't know anything about any young girl."

"You don't know her?" asked Henriette in astonishment.

"No."

"Am I mistaken? This house answers the description, and your name is Frochard, is it not?"

"Ephremie Frochard. What then?"

"You beg in the streets with a young girl who sings, do you not?"

"Me beg in the streets!" replied the old woman in a highly indignant tone, as if the idea of such a thing was an insult to her. "Why should I beg? Haven't I two sons who work for me? One of them is a knife-grinder—look there is his wheel, and the other one—is—oh if he were only here now."

"You must be the one," said Henriette, half to herself: "the doctor told me that he knew you, and——"

Henriette stopped talking, and gave utterance to a scream, expressive of surprise and fear.

She had noticed the shawl and scarf which the old woman had taken from Louise, and fastened upon herself.

"What is the matter?" asked the old hag, in no little surprise.

"That shawl—I know it. It is hers—it is hers, I tell you," screamed Henriette, as a thousand fears for her sister's safety presented themselves to her mind.

"Not a bit of it, it is mine," boldly asserted La Frochard, thinking she could make the young girl believe her.

"And this scarf around your neck."

"Well, what of it?"

"It was made for her by my own hands," exclaimed Henriette, tearing it from the old woman's neck. "Oh, wretch! you have lied to me."

For an instant La Frochard was astounded. She had thought to persuade Henriette that she knew nothing of her sister; but it was impossible.

Her round, wicked face grew perfectly fiendish with rage, as she hissed through her clenched teeth, the single word:

"Caught!"

Then, after a moment's thought, she turned to Henriette with a smile that was intended to be sympathizing.

"Well, well," she said in a sorrowful voice, "if you must know the truth, I'll tell you. When you came in, you were so excited and frightened, I didn't dare to tell you all——"

"All! all what?" interrupted Henriette, in an agony of apprehension. "Speak quickly."

"One evening about three months ago," continued mother Frochard, "I met the girl you are looking for, wandering about the streets. I had pity on her, and brought her home with me, where I took good care of her."

The old woman stopped to wipe away imaginary tears; but the agonized girl exclaimed:

"Go on, for Heaven's sake go on."

"Well," whined the old hag, "she knew I was poor and couldn't afford to keep her for nothing, so she sang sometimes in the streets—just to help me—and she sang like a little bird."

Again the old woman's feelings overcome her, and she was obliged to stop.

"And then, what then?"

"And then, why you see the poor child wasn't very strong, and what with the life we lead, and the sorrow she felt she couldn't stand it, and the poor little bird broke down entirely, She said she couldn't sing any more, and that was the end of it. For two days she has been dumb. She'll sing no more—no more."

As Mother Frochard finished, her voice, which, at first had had the professional whine in it, sank almost to a whisper, and seating herself in a chair she covered her face with her apron, and simulated an agony of grief.

"Dead!" exclaimed Henriette, while every vestige of color left her face, and she stood like one petrified, "dead, my sister, my Louise is dead!" and overcome by her intense sorrow she sank insensible upon the floor.

"Fainted, eh?" cried the old woman, jumping up quickly, and gazing at the prostrate girl. "What am I to do with her? Oh, if Jacques were only here. I must go for him."

She started towards the door; but the thought flashed over her that she had forgotten to lock the garret door, and she ran back and performed that duty.

"There," she said, with a sigh of satisfaction, "there is nothing to fear now, and I'll go and call Jacques."

The old woman departed in search of her son, leaving Henriette lying upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RECOGNITION.

Not many minutes after Mother Frochard went in search of Jacques, Louise, recovering her consciousness, which she had lost through the beating the old woman had given her, to [illegible] to remain in the garret, pushed with all [illegible] strength against the door of her prison, and [illegible] had loosened the screws, it yielded to her [illegible] and she was freed from her place of torture.

For a moment she stood at the head of the stairs, with her ears strained to their utmost tension to catch any sound that should betoken the presence of any one in the hut.

But all was still, and she commenced to descend the stairs, feeling her way carefully, lest she should stumble on some of the decayed boards.

"They are all gone," she murmured. "Pierre told me the truth, the lock would not hold. Yes, I will follow his advice. If I can find my way to the street through that long passage, I will ask the first passer-by to take me to that good doctor at the Hospital St. Louis."

Trembling with excitement she felt her way to the foot of the stairs, where one step further, in the same direction would have brought her in contact with the insensible body of her sister; and then groping for the wall, she reached the door.

With a cry of joy as she reached it, she felt, with eager, feverish hands, for the rude latch.

Eagerly she tried to open it, but it resisted all her efforts, and as the truth flashed over her mind, her hands dropped by her side, and she sank to the floor like one smitten with the palsy.

"Locked! locked! What shall I do?"

The sudden change from hope that was almost a certainty, to deep despair, overpowered her for the moment.

But at last she remembered what she should have thought of before.

"Pierre told me he had made another key for it," and starting up she groped her way across the room towards her bed, almost brushing the garments of that sister she was so anxious to meet, as she passed.

With hands trembling so that she could hardly control them, Louise felt for the precious key which should assure her of freedom.

A cry of joy burst from her pallid, quivering lips as her fingers came in contact with the precious object.

"Good, brave Pierre," she exclaimed thankfully. "Now I will go at once."

She arose to her feet, and made two or three attempts in the right direction, when her foot came in contact with the clothing of Henriette.

Hastily she stooped down, and felt of the inanimate body.

"A woman!" she exclaimed in accents of deepest terror. "She is cold, she is dead."

Terribly alarmed by what she could not see, the poor girl, believing herself to be in the presence of death, covered her face with her hands, and crouched close to the floor.

"Oh, Heaven!" she cried, "they have committed some terrible crime and fled."

She timidly stretched out her hand, and passed it once more over the still form. In so doing she felt the heart beat, and with a glad cry she raised the head of the person before her.

"She is not dead! madam, madam, speak, speak to me. She does not hear me. What shall I do? I cannot leave her thus."

Dear as was her liberty to her, the poor, blind child could not leave a fellow creature in distress, and she tried by all the means in her power to awaken the insensible girl.

While she was thus engaged, the door opened, and mother Frochard and Jacques entered.

For a single instant they stood transfixed with surprise, and then with a single thought they rushed towards the two girls.

"Separate them at once—quick!" shouted Jacques to his mother who was a few steps in advance.

La Frochard did not need this warning cry to induce her to rush towards Louise, and grasp her roughly by the arm.

"What are you doing here?" she cried. "How did you get out?"

Louise clung to the body of Henriette, to prevent the old woman from carrying her away; but her slight strength was of no avail against the old hag's determination, and she was rudely flung against the staircase.

As if roused by the noise, Henriette opened her eyes, and showed signs of returning consciousness.

"Quick!" shouted Jacques, as he saw this movement of Henriette's, "get her out of the way—quick, I tell you, the other one is coming too."

"Get back with you—at once," cried the old woman, at the same time dragging Louise up the stairs, and accompanying each word with a cruel blow.

Just at this moment Pierre entered, and seeing Henriette lying upon the floor, and Louise struggling upon the stairs, he understood at once, that it was the sister whom Louise had so earnestly prayed to meet.

"But the woman who is lying there?" cried Louise to the old woman.

"That is our business and none of yours. Get along with you."

As La Frochard got Louise to the head of the stairs, Henriette, who had risen to her feet, saw the blind girl, and running towards her, she exclaimed:

"Ah, Louise, Louise!"

Jacques seized her instantly, and putting his hand over her mouth, prevented her from speaking again or advancing any further.

But the blind girl had caught the sound of her sister's voice, and that lent her additional strength.

Uttering a cry of surprise and joy, she endeavored to escape from the old wretch who was nearly choking her.

"Go in—I tell you get in with you," cried La Frochard, as she pushed Louise in the room, and released her hold of her throat in order to shut the door.

Just then Henriette had succeeded in pushing Jacques' hand from her mouth, and running to the foot of the stairs, cried in a loud voice:

"Louise! Sister!"

The cry gave Louise the strength of a lioness for a moment, and pushing the old woman back she ran down the stairs, and the two so long separated, met in a close, loving embrace.

"Henriette! Henriette!" exclaimed Louise joyfully, covering her sister's face with kisses, "It is you, it is you."

"Oh, my poor Louise, my poor Louise," said Henriette, caressing her sister's face. "How you must have suffered here among these miserable wretches! Yes, miserable wretches that you are," she continued, turning to Jacques and his mother, who, now that the sisters were aware of each other's presence, felt that it would make their own case more desperate, to attempt to part them. "I will have you punished."

She led Louise towards the door; but Jacques, seeing her movement, darted past her, and placed himself directly in front of the door.

"Let us go at once!" commanded Henriette. "Let us go!"

"You shall not go," replied Jacques in a rage.

"What! would you dare to prevent us?"

"Mother," said Pierre, going towards La Frochard, and speaking in a low voice. "You had better warn him against violence. It is dangerous!"

"We must keep them," replied the old woman impatiently; "if they escape they will denounce us."

"You cannot leave here," reiterated Jacques.

"I will cry out," said Henriette firmly; "I will call for help."

"Try it," was the fierce reply, "and see what good it will do. Besides, I warn you we come of a family who kill." As he said this, he rushed towards Louise, and seizing her roughly by the arm dragged her towards him.

"She is mine," he exclaimed, "and I will keep her."

Louise uttered a scream which pierced Pierre's very heart, and infused into it that courage he thought he was so deficient in.

"Oh, this is infamous!" he cried, as he rushed between Jacques and Louise.

"Do you dare to interfere against me?" cried Jacques, almost beside himself with rage.

"I dare!" answered Pierre, and there was that in his eye which Jacques had never seen there before.

"Against me!" he exclaimed again, as though doubting that he had heard aright.

"Yes, against you!" exclaimed Pierre, boldly. "I have acted the coward long enough. I thought because you were big and strong, that you were brave; but you are not. You fight with women—you are a coward! In their defence my courage will be more than a match for your strength."

"Brave Pierre!" exclaimed Louise, encouragingly.

"Depend on me, mademoiselle," replied the cripple, who seemed to have grown less deformed, and more of a man through his new born courage.

"What do you want?" demanded Jacques, whom this new phase of Pierre's character had astonished, and he could hardly believe what he saw.

"Let these two women go," was the cripple's firm reply.

"Indeed!" sneered Jacques. "Suppose I refuse, what then?" and as he asked the question he looked at his brother as if he would intimidate him with a glance as had been his wont in days past.

But Pierre's new born courage was deep. He drew it from a source that could still cause it to remain, and that source was the trembling, pallid girl by his side.

"What then?" repeated Pierre. "What then? Well you have said it: 'We come of a family who kill.'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

REPARATION.

Let us for a few moments, visit the private office of the Minister of Police.

The Count de Linieres is seated at his writing table engaged in deep thought. Around him are all the evidences of luxury which wealth can purchase, and yet he does not appear to be comfortable. He has just received word of commendation from the king, and yet he is not satisfied with himself.

Picard had called at the office of the minister a few hours previous, and by asserting that Henriette Girard had been taken from La Salpetriere, and was then on her way to the prison ship in company with the other condemned prisoners, and also by producing the certificate of the guard, the valet had received an order for the release of the Chevalier de Vaudrey from the Bastile.

The court had asserted the authority of the family, and the power of his office, and yet there were many things on his mind which he could not banish.

He reviewed his conduct towards Henriette, and in his heart, he could not congratulate himself for the part he had taken in the persecution of the poor girl.

He had arrested Henriette, and sent her to La Salpetriere as a fallen woman, and now she was on her way to a life-long exile, branded with a crime of which he knew she was innocent, and for which she suffered because of his pride and ambition.

While he was thus indulging in these gloomy thoughts, his wife entered.

She had not heard that Henriette was condemned to exile, and had come to intercede for the unhappy girl.

In a few words she explained the object of her visit.

"It is too late," replied the count, abruptly.

"Too late! Why?"

"Because she is now on her way to the place of her exile," replied De Linieres in a low voice, as if half ashamed to allow his wife to know how far his pride could control his official duties.

"Exile!" exclaimed the countess, sinking into a chair, while a deathly palor came over her face, alarming the count more than he cared to show. "Why have you done this wicked thing?"

Her husband made her no answer, and for many moments the countess remained with her face covered by her hands, shuddering with horror at the most unjust deed that had been committed against a defenseless, innocent girl.

A great struggle was going on in her mind. Should she at this time confess all of her past life to her husband—show what Henriette had done for her own child, and for that reason urge her pardon?

She trembled as she thought of what her husband's wrath might be when he learned all, and for some time she could not bring herself to say those things which alienate herself forever from him.

"When was she sent away?" asked the countess, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Two hours ago."

"Then there is yet time to save her from being carried to that dreadful place."

"There is time if I wish to so use it," replied De Linieres, in a significant tone.

"She *must* be sent for!" exclaimed the lady, in a firm tone.

"Must be?" and the count elevated his eyebrows in a manner peculiar to him when displeased.

"Yes, must be," repeated his wife. "I will tell you why if you will not interrupt me; for in that case my courage might fail me," and in a rapid manner she continued: "Before I met you, Count De Linieres, I married without my parents consent, and secretly, a poor man. My parents discovered our secret, and almost before my very eyes they murdered my husband. Soon after I became a mother. My child was taken from me and left upon the steps of Notre Dame. A poor man, Henriette Girard's father, found the child, carried it to his humble home and brought it up as one of his own. That child is the blind sister that Henriette was separated from, and whom we should have found had you not prevented us from leaving the house in the Faubourg St. Honore. Henriette has taken care of, and loved my darling as her own sister."

For a moment the countess paused, as if overcome by emotion, and then throwing herself at the count's feet she cried:

"I pray you, on my bended knees, to save this girl from the fearful and unjust doom you have pronounced against her. For my sake, who has suffered untold misery at being obliged to be separated from my child, and in keeping the secret from you. I beg of you to save her who has been a mother to my child, and who, for the sake of that child, refused the offers made to her by the chevalier. I beg——"

But the poor woman could say no more. Overcome by her feelings, she burst into a flood of tears, still kneeling at her husband's feet.

Very tenderly did the Count raise and support her to a chair. His countenance showed traces of the deepest agitation, and the gaze which he fastened upon his wife, was mild and sympathetic.

Turning to his table, he wrote a few lines on the paper which bore the official seal of the office, and then rang the bell.

The automaton which acted as clerk appeared, and to him, the Count handed the paper, saying:

"See that this order is executed without a moment's delay, and bring the person, named therein, to me immediately upon her arrival."

The clerk bowed and withdrew.

As soon as they were alone again, the minister approached his wife, and laying his hand upon her head, said in a voice which was singularly gentle and sweet.

"My poor Diane, how you must have suffered."

In an instant the countess had flung her arms around her husband's neck, and was weeping happy tears upon his bosom.

Now was the secret which had existed so long between them, and poisoned the lives of both, cleared away, and for the first time, since their married life began they were united.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RESCUE.

For a moment Jacques was almost petrified with astonishment. That Pierre, the poor, spiritless cripple should dare thus defy him, was past his comprehension.

But only for a moment did he remain inactive, and then he went towards the young girls as if to separate them.

"Dare to lay a hand on either of them," shouted Pierre, as he ran to his wheel, and took therefrom, a long knife which he had been sharpening, "and I will plunge this knife into your heart."

Jacques recoiled from before the weapon, and Pierre placed himself before Henriette and Louise, who, clasped in each other's arms, were awaiting the result of the struggle which was now inevitable.

"Your life shall pay for this!" cried Jacques, drawing his cutlass and going towards the brave cripple.

"Remember that you are brothers," cried the old woman, who was now thoroughly frightened.

"Yes, brothers as of old," said Pierre bitterly, as he thought of the brotherly love that Jacques had ever shown towards him, "the sons of Adam, only this time the parts are changed, and Abel will kill Cain."

"Very well, if you will have it," exclaimed Jacques savagely, as he made a pass at Pierre.

"A woman!" she exclaimed in accents of deepest terror. "She is cold—she is dead."

The struggle had now commenced, and for a few moments nothing could be heard but the clashing of the steel, and Jacques' fearful oaths.

But it was not possible for the cripple to hold out long.

His brother's weapon was nearly three times as long as his, and Jacques had every advantage in the point of size, and strength.

In a short time Pierre had received a fearful blow on the shoulder, from which the blood flowed freely.

"He is wounded," exclaimed Henriette in a terrified voice.

"No!" shouted Pierre, hoping to deceive them as to his fast failing strength

"Isn't that enough, cripple?" asked Jacques in a mocking tone as he stopped for a moment to gain breath.

"No," shouted the brave boy; "cut again, for while she is in danger you may slash my flesh into ribbons; I shall feel nothing."

Enraged by his words Jacques sprang upon him with the ferocity of a tiger, and it at once became apparent, that however brave the boy might be, he could not withstand such a furious assault, and that in a very few moments the young girls would again be in the power of the villainous Jacques with no one to defend or protect them.

Hoping that De Vaudrey might hear her, Henriette cried in a loud, despairing voice:

"Help! help!"

That cry seemed to arouse La Frochard from the apathy into which she had fallen, and rushing towards Henriette she placed her hand over the girl's mouth to prevent a repetition of the cry.

But that one cry had reached the ears of the man who would have rushed into certain death at the bidding of that voice, and just as Jacques had borne Pierre to the ground, and was about to run him through the heart, the door was flung open, and De Vaudrey entered in time to strike Jacques weapon up from its aim.

"What is this?" he exclaimed angrily. "A ruffian attacking a cripple? Down with your weapon, you villain, or by heaven I'll beat it out of your hand, and spit you as I would a dog."

Jacques could read but very little mercy in the chevalier's countenance, and he retreated out of the reach of his weapon.

"What right have you to interfere?" he cried savagely. "You shall pay for this."

As the chevalier entered, the old woman, seeing that all was discovered, had gone toward Louise, and was trying to drag her away, though for what purpose, or what she could hope to affect by it, would be impossible to say.

But Pierre, who had not allowed Louise to escape from his sight a moment, lest in his rage at being baffled, Jacques should attempt to wreak his vengeance upon the young girl, now sprang to her assistance, and forced his mother to the further end of the room.

The chevalier turned his head for a moment to discover the cause of the disturbance, and Jacques thinking that he had an opportunity for revenge, raised his sword to strike.

Another moment and De Vaudrey would have received his death blow; but a low, warning cry from Henrietta caused him to turn his head just in time to ward off the blow.

Jacques sprang back to avoid a pass which the chevalier made at him, and thus escaped for the moment.

"Now, villain, down with your weapon, I say, and permit these ladies to leave this place, before you compel me to punish you as you deserve."

As he spoke De Vaudrey moved towards Henriette.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Jacques, now grown furious. "You punish me! So you are the lover of the other one. Well, take her and go; leave the little one to me."

And Jacques placed himself before the door, with uplifted weapon, to prevent Louise from leaving the house.

"Scoundrel!" cried De Vaudrey, advancing towards him.

Again the clash of steel wrung out in that squallid hut; but this time it was not Jacques who was the victor.

He was no match for the chevalier in sword play, and a well directed blow made an ugly gash on his wrist, and sent his weapon flying out of his hand.

Almost at the same moment a noise was heard just outside of the door leading to the river, and Picard's well known voice was heard saying:

"Open, open in the king's name."

That cry, so appaling to criminals, seemed to strike terror to the heart of Jacques and his mother.

Pierre ran to the door, and was unbarring it when La Frochard sprang at him with a howl of rage.

She grasped him by the throat, and weak and exhausted as he was by the loss of blood, she had no difficulty in throwing him against the stairs, where she held him firmly.

"Then in the king's name I will open it for you," again cried Picard, and immediately sounds were heard as if some heavy object was being used to batter it down.

Two blows were sufficient to shatter the worm-eaten timbers, and a file of soldiers entered with Picard at their head.

The old woman cowered in the further corner of the room, and Jacques shrank back as far as possible from the intruders.

"Ah, master," exclaimed Picard, somewhat surprised to find De Vaudrey there before him. "You found your way along that passage before me, and mademoiselle too."

"Yes, and in good time, Picard. Here, some of you guards bind this ruffian."

Jacques was soon bound, and not until then did De Vaudrey approach Henriette, and folding her in a loving embrace, exclaimed in a voice that conveyed the world of love he felt for her.

"Henriette, my love, my own."

"A second time I owe my life to you," said Henriette, in a voice choking with emotion.

"No, not to me," replied De Vaudrey, unwilling to receive any praise for what he had done. "Thank Picard there, whose selfish bravery left me to defend the end of a passage where there were no foes, while he stormed the front of the castle. Your cries for help guided me to the rescue."

"Louise, my darling sister," said Henriette, taking her by the hand and leading her forward, "thank your preserver."

The blind girl's eyes filled with tears as clasping her hands and turning her sightless orbs towards where De Vaudrey stood, she said in a trembling voice which carried greater meaning with it than words could:

"Ah, monsieur, you do not know from what a frightful fate you have saved us."

While this conversation was going on, all eyes were turned towards the two orphans, and Mother Frochard was unnoticed.

This was her opportunity, and she resolved to embrace it.

She had no wish to taste the reward which justice had in store for her, and she resolved to escape.

Stealing cautiously past the soldiers, she had reached the door in safety.

In another moment she would have been free; but there was one in the room who had counted on taking this same Mother Frochard under his own care, and that one was Picard.

Although his attention had been diverted from her for a moment, his eyes sought the place again where she was last standing, and to his surprise she was not there.

A rapid glance around the room showed the old woman in the act of opening the door, and in an instant Picard's hand was on her shoulder.

"Oh, no you don't, old lady." he exclaimed as he obliged her to come back; "you must not run away from your dutiful son because he is in a little trouble. He'll need your motherly care now more than ever."

Seeing that escape was impossible, and punishment, for her many sins near at hand, the old hag broke down most pitiably, and in a most sorrowful voice whined:

"I'm only a poor old woman. I don't know anything about their evil ways."

But the appeal was lost on all save poor Pierre, who stood bending over his wheel in an attitude of deepest grief. As his mother spoke he held out his hands to her as though he would bear her troubles as he had borne his own uncomplainingly.

"Picard," said the chevalier, "take charge of this worthy couple, mother and son. My uncle, the count, will see to their punishment. Off with them."

Authority was sweet to Picard, and he made the most of it. Turning to the guards, he said in a most pompous manner.

"Take that male, and likewise that female villain to the prison of La Roquette, there to await the justice of our lord the king."

The guards closed around the prisoners, and were about to march them off, when the old woman, with a whine that was more natural than her habitual one, and with the tears rolling down her villainous face said:

"Please, good gentleman, I am only a poor old woman."

She had forgotten the many prayers for mercy that had been made to her by the poor blind girl, and which she had answered only with curses or blows. As she had sown so must she reap; but in the time of her sowing she had forgotten the harvest that she surely must gather, and she who had shown no mercy when she would ruin body and soul, now prayed for mercy.

To Jacques brutal nature such signs of weakness was disgusting, and ill-befitting a Frochard. He turned upon her with a savage look.

"Stop your whining," he said coarsely. "Remember that you are a Frochard.

This appeal seemed to find a response in the old woman's heart Perhaps she remembered that when her husband was led to the scaffold, not a word of fear escaped him; but he met his doom with curses upon his lips until they were hushed by death.

Without another word La Frochard turned to go, and as she passed Pierre he held out his hands imploring, and in a most piteous voice said:

"Jacques, mother, one word before you go."

His mother did not notice this appeal. Her motherly instincts were long since dried up in her bosom, and she did not deign to bestow one glance upon him.

But Jacques favored him with a wicked look and exclaimed savagely:

"Not one word. Go to your fine friends and remember that you sent your brother to the scaffold."

As though these words did not express enough of the rage that was raging in his bosom Jacques sprang toward his brother and bent him like a reed over the wheel.

In another instant the poor cripple would have received his death, as he had his distorted limbs, at the hands of his only brother; but Picard, ever watchful, interrupted him, and like a wild beast baffled of his prey Jacques was led, cursing, away.

With a hymn of praise in her heart did Louise leave the house that had been the scene of so much suffering to her, and fervent was the silent prayer that Henriette uttered, as with her arm around her sister and her hand clasped in that of the chevalier, she went from that noisome place to reap the reward of all her sufferings.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

Picard dressed the cripple's wounds, and conducted him, with the rest of the party, to De Vaudrey's house, where it was their intention to form some plan of action; for they believed that should the Count learn that Henriette was still in Paris, he would attempt to separate her from the chevalier.

But a great change had taken place in the minister's feelings, and they were soon to learn it.

Hardly had they entered, when a servant brought a letter for the chevalier, and from the seal he knew that it was from the uncle.

He opened it and read aloud the following words:

"I understand now, why you and Picard asked for a guard. You will come directly to me as soon as you have finished your work, and bring with you, those whom you have rescued.

"LINIERES, Minister of Police."

De Vaudrey hardly knew how to interpret the tenor of the letter. Was it written in a friendly spirit, or was his uncle still incensed against him?

It could hardly be the latter case, and he resolved to obey the letter fully.

In a few moments the party were at the hotel of the Minister of Police, and leaving the two orphans and Pierre with the valet in one of the drawing rooms, the chevalier entered his uncle's presence.

The count and countess were together, and the affectionate welcome which he received from both showed him how idle were his fears that his uncle had not relented.

"Have you succeeded?" asked the countess in a voice which betrayed all the agitation she felt.

"I have."

"Thank God," replied his aunt fervently.

De Vaudrey gave her a warning glance which was observed by the count.

"Within the past hour," he said gravely, as he pressed the chevalier's hand. "I have learned the truth. The countess has confessed the secret which has clouded our married life."

De Vaudrey clasped the hands of both, and was about to speak, when the count interrupted him.

"I ask your pardon, chevalier, for all that I have made you suffer. I have done all in my power to repair the wrong I have done you, and within an hour Henriette Girard will be here."

De Vaudrey looked at his uncle in surprise. He could not understand the meaning of his words; but at last a light broke over him.

Under the belief that Marianne was Henriette, the count had sent for her, and the chevalier now saw an opportunity of rewarding her for the noble sacrifice she had made in behalf of the woman he loved.

"My child!" exclaimed the countess, "have you brought my child?"

"I have, and she will be here immediately."

And as he spoke De Vaudrey left the room, and returned leading Louise by the hand.

Of the meeting between that mother and the child from whom she had been separated so long, we will draw the veil.

Such scenes are too sacred for the writer to profane by trying to describe them through the cold medium of letters.

While it was taking place the chevalier explained to his uncle the sacrifice that Marianne had made, and in a few moments all were assembled together.

As soon as the first burst of joy was over Louise turned to the chevalier and said in a voice, that to Pierre's hungry soul, sounded like music from the sphere.

"Monsieur, we are all so happy, yet we must not forget poor Pierre. Noble, brave Pierre! Pierre, Pierre—where is he?"

"I remained, mademoiselle," said Pierre, coming forward, while tears bedewed his cheeks and his voice was painfully husky and tremulous, "to ask the privilege of saying farewell. Your good heart will not forget the poor cripple?"

"Never, never, Pierre," replied Louise, fervently, as she pressed his hard, labor-stained hands between her thin, wasted ones.

"A mother thanks you with more than words," said the countess, in an earnest tone.

"Let his reward be my care," quickly added the chevalier, and then turning to Picard he said: "I look to you to see that Pierre wants for nothing until I shall have time to provide for him to-morrow."

We will leave the party in their happiness, and close our story by briefly relating a few incidents which took place immediately afterward.

Louise was at once placed under the care of the good doctor who would have cured her even when she was only a charity patient, had he not been prevented by Mother Frochard, and he gave her mother every reason to hope for her recovery.

At last the day came when the operation was to be performed which would show whether she was to have the use of her eyes or not, and the blind girl bore the pain as she had borne her sufferings in the home of the Frochards, bravely.

A few weeks that passed swiftly away, thanks to a kind mother's and Henriette's care, in a darkened room, and when she emerged her sight was completely restored.

Marianne, trembling for fear that her deception was discovered, and that Henriette was to be made to suffer in her stead, was brought back by the guards, and her fears were changed to joy when she learned the joyful tidings of Louise's restoration to her mother, and Henriette's happiness.

De Vaudrey settled a comfortable income upon her, but she insisted on serving Henriette as maid until such time as she went to gladden the home of a worthy man.

Pierre—good, honest Pierre had his reward here on earth as we know he had it hereafter.

The Count de Linieres insisted on being allowed to provide for him, and now the happy cripple received an education such as few could boast of in those days, and rose to be one of the most noted advocates in Paris.

For his sake the sentence of death against his mother and Jacques was changed to exile, and we will hope that in a new country they changed their manner of living, and endeavored to atone for the many sins they had committed.

Picard never again occupied the position of valet to the Chevalier de Vaudrey.

The chevalier pleaded so earnestly with his uncle for him, that within a month after the closing scenes at the boat-house, he received his commission as captain of the guards, and although he never rose any higher he passed his life very happily, especially after he conceived a violent passion for the repentant Marianne, and married her.

Of Henriette and the chevalier, we can see very little that the reader has not already imagined. In answer to De Vaudrey's prayer that she would become his wife, she answered

"To be near Louise, my sister, and to be your wife seems too great a joy."

Our story is finished, and as we write the closing lines a great hope comes up in our heart, that in presenting this tale in this form, we may have induced some reader not to pass by anyone deserving of charity: but to give a kind word and pleasant smile to those whose lives are dreary and miserable, even if they cannot give money. Remember that he who possessed one talent was held as responsible as he who had an hundred, and that a kind word has saved many a soul from the mire of Despond

[THE END.]

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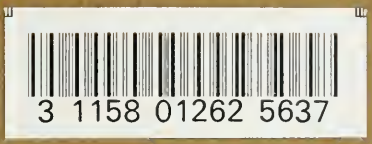
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